



# Nana's Daughter,

## A STORY OF PARISIAN LIFE.

\_BY\_

## ALFRED SIRVEN AND HENRI LEVERDIER,

With a letter from the authors to M. Emile Zola.

TRANSLATED FROM THE 25th FRENCH EDITION.

When M. Emile Zola wrote "Nana," the world thought that no truer photograph of the kaleidoscopic life which is so truly and essentially Parisian could be brought out by any other author. It remained for Alfred Sirven and Henri Leverdier to combine French wit, ingenuity and realistic word-painting to disapprove this opinion.

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## HER FATAL SIN.

### THE PROLOGUE.

### CHAPTER I

"AND then 'oo sal have a pink dress, like the boofical mammie's. Rica will dress her dolly. Look out of window, dolly. See the mans has put up the big, big star."

The twilight dusk filled the room; the fire was burning red, and glowing inside the tall nursery fender. The little figure by the window was dimly discernible. Two chairs were pulled close up to the fire, and two heads were close together whispering.

"Mans is gone, dolly. Paps er gone to see his 'ittle girl like Rica.

Ush—ush! Go a peep, dolly; time a dolly was a bye-bye."

"Miss Rica—Miss Rica!" a voice from the fireside called shrilly;
"come along, it's tea-time." Then, in a lower tone: "She's that queer!
Hark to her talking to her doll for all the world like a Christian." Then, louder: "Miss Rica!"

The little figure slipped down from the wide window-ledge and

approached the fire.

"Won't you shake 'ands, Miss Rica?" asked the second person, sitting

in the big arm-chair.

The fire suddenly fell in, and there was a bright blaze. It shone on the tiny little form standing between the two chairs, a face with great gray eyes that looked earnestly at the speaker, almost elfish in its fringe of dark straight locks. The small arms were closed tight over the precious dolly.
"It's Mrs. Marvel, Miss Rica," said the other figure. "You remember

her?"

The little hand left the dolly, and was placed in the large work-stained one held out to her.

"I 'member," said the child.

Mrs. Marvel stooped forward and lifted her onto her knee.

"What have you been doing?" she asked.

"Talking a dolly," said Rica, looking at the kind motherly face with wide wondering eyes.

Mrs. Marvel drew the small form closer to her and kissed her pretty

mouth.

"Bless her, she's a dear child!" she said tenderly. "Ain't she, nurse?"

"Oh, she's good enough," replied nurse, briskly.

She was filling a cosy brown teapot with boiling water from the kettle, whisking about busily, and, lastly, lighting the gas.

"Now, Miss Rica, come to tea," she said, these manœuvres over.

Rica got off Mrs. Marvel's knee, and with many soothing murmurs and much solemnity deposited dolly in a dilapidated cradle standing in a corner; then she clambered up into her high chair, and contemplated the

repast with no abatement of her gravity.

It was a homely but plentiful meal, and with the bright fire blazing away, the red baize blind carefully drawn, the room looked cheerful and cosy. Nurse and Mrs. Marvel discussed tea-cakes and gossip at the same time, while Rica drank her milk-and-water, and ate her bread and butter. slowly and dreamingly.

"Don't she never go down-stairs?" asked Mrs. Marvel during a mo-

mentary pause in nurse's voluble talk.

"Once in a blue moon," returned the other; "when some of missus's grand friends ask to see her, which ain't often."

"And she -- don't she come up here?"

"Almost never. Lor' bless you! folk have got somethink better to do nor to trouble their 'eds about children. They bring 'em into the world - that's quite enough for them; the little 'uns may shift along as best they can!"

"If she were mine, it 'ud be different," sighed Mrs. Marvel, tenderly contemplating the tiny flower-like face opposite. "What does the

Almighty give us children for, if it's not to love 'em?"

"Can't say," returned nurse dryly. "Yes, you may get down," as Rica pushed her plate and cup from her.

The child put her two hands together, shut her eyes, and said her

grace, nurse regarding her triumphantly the while.

"Yes," she said, when it was finished; "yes, I thinks I've done my duty to the child, if her mother don't do hern."

Rica came to her side slowly.

"Boofical mammie is going way - way from Rica," she said in her low quiet voice.

Nurse shot a telegraphic look across to Mrs. Marvel and pursed up

"Little girls should be seen and not heard," she remarked sententiously. "Come here, Miss Rica, and let me untie your pinafore; it's time you was in bed."

The evening toilet completed, Rica knelt down by her nurse's side,

and repeated a little prayer for papa, boofical mammie, nursie and self.

Then the little white-robed figure disappeared through the door to the

inner nursery, and carefully closed it.

"She always goes to bed by herself in the dark," observed nurse, in reply to Mrs. Marvel's look of astonishment. The two sat on chatting till the clock had ticked from half-past six to eight. It was not often nurse had a visitor, and she made the best of her time.

Suddenly, in the midst of deep and confidential communications, came

a knock at the door.

"It's missus's maid, Mdlle. Rosalie, I expect," nurse said crossly, and she uttered a sharp "Come in."

The door was opened, and as the intruder was discovered to view. nurse rose quickly with a hurried exclamation.

The new comer advanced into the room.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am, I'm sure," stammered the nurse.

"Don't trouble, nurse; pray sit down-your friend also. want to see Miss Ulrica."

The voice was soft and sweet, the eyes stars of beauty; the light fell tenderly on the graceful figure draped in white satin, which gleamed and shone at every movement like pearls.

It was an apparition of loveliness that caused Mrs. Marvel to stand and

stare open-mouthed.

"Miss Rica's gone to bed, ma'am," said nurse, lighting a candle; "she've been gone this hour and a half."

"I will be very careful and not wake her, if I can help it," replied her

mistress with a smile, taking the candle.

At the door of the inner nursery she stopped, her trailing garments sweeping the floor in their richness.

"Does—does she always go to bed in the dark, nurse?" she asked.

with a catch in her breath.

"Always," returned nurse abruptly.

Then the tall slender figure passed softly in, the door was pushed behind her, and the two women left staring at one another in amazement. "How beautiful - she is like a hangel!" whispered Mrs. Marvel.

"It's all outside," replied nurse bitterly; "there ain't no heart under-

neath."

The door closed, the mother crept quietly across the room, candle in

hand, to the small cot beside the large bed.

She put the light down on a table near, and bent over the sleeping child. The clothes were tossed away from the little form, the hands flung out on either side; Rica lay on her back, her head nestled comfortably on the pillow.

The eyelids, with their long fringe of dark lashes, were closed, but

something shone on their darkness, and glittered on the little cheek.

The mother bent lower. The child was breathing quietly, but every now and then a slight sob betrayed the truth; there were tears on the tiny face.

The watcher slipped down beside the cot, heedless of her rich dress,

and buried her face in the bed-clothes.

"Poor little mite! God forgive me! How wicked I've been! My poor little child! I have lost all thought of her in this miserable life." The little child moved restlessly. Perhaps the light on her eyes half

awakened her. The heavy lashes were lifted; she struggled up in bedher glance fell on the kneeling form.

Boofical mammie," she said sleepily, rubbing her eyes, "come a see

Rica."

The mother started up, and encircling the little figure, drew it into her arms, while she rained kisses on the trembling lips and great wondering eyes.
"Yes," she murmured, "mammie has come, my own little one — your

"Mammie go 'way, but Rica no key - be good; nursie say so."

The voice was very tired, the little head pillowed on the soft white

throat drooped drowsily.

"God have mercy on me for my neglect!" prayed the mother inwardly as she laid the child tenderly in the cot again. "I have been wrong, but I will atone! Go to sleep, my darling; mammie will come again very soon. She is not going away, my pet. Rica shall come to mammie whenever she likes, and she shall go out with mammie, too. Kiss me, my precious!"

The tired little mouth was uplifted, and as she was laid back on the pillow Rica was fast asleep again. Drawing her hand over her eyes to ease the hot pain in them, the mother rose, stood silent for many minutes, watching the little form, then taking the candle, with one lingering look and a deep sigh, went slowly from the room.

"I awoke her at first, nurse," she said gently as she entered the nurs-

ery; "but she is asleep again."
"Yes, ma'am; she's a good child—never gives no trouble—is Miss As old-fashioned as a woman, though she is only four year old, but

very good."
"You have always been so kind to her, nurse." The speaker's voice trembled a little. "I should like to think you were with her when I am

not here."

She stooped to arrange her dress nervously.

"Thank you, ma'am; yes, ma'am," returned nurse, much gratified.
"You won't mind if I come up sometimes to see her?"

"Lor', Mrs. Messenger, ma'am, as if I could mind! She's your own child."

With another faint smile, and a pleasant good-night to both the

women, Mrs. Messenger opened the nursery door and passed out.

"Well, this is a rum go!" observed nurse after a moment's pause. "It's 'most a year since she's been up here. What brought her up to-night, I wonder?"

"Perhaps you wrong her," said Mrs. Marvel, slowly. "It looks a

good face, but troubled and sad like."

"Well, we've all got our share of this world's troubles," was the philosophical reply. "And now, if you're ready, we'll go down-stairs." ain't been out to-day, so I'll walk a little bit of the way with you."

She lowered the gas, and they left the room, and made their way to

the kitchen.

Mrs. Messenger progressed down the broad staircase slowly—almost wearily.

The soft tender look in her eyes had faded away, a hardness spoilt the

tremulous beauty of the mouth.

She stood for one minute outside a large door; then, with a heavy sigh, pushed it open, and entered the room.

Two men were seated in opposite chairs, both, apparently, engrossed

in their newspapers.

The one was thin, sharp-faced, with clean-shaven chin and side-wiskers, very pale cold eyes, and a strong expression of determination and dog-gedness dwelling on his features. The other was a very handsome man, whose eyes, dark and beautiful, were filled with a glow of unrestrained admiration and passion as the slender graceful form advanced towards him.

She gave him her hand in silence, and sank listlessly into a chair. The thin man shot a glance at her, but did not open his lips. From the shelter of his newspaper he watched the eager confidential manner of the other carefully.

Mrs. Messenger made but languid response to this conversation, and, as dinner was announced, she put her hand on his arm, and was led down-stairs.

The luxurious meal progressed slowly. The hostess leaned back carelessly in her chair, toying with the bread crumbs beside her plate, but making no effort to amuse her guest, and perfectly indifferent to the long and frequent glances he directed at her.

"It was a pity you did not stay longer last night," he said, after a lengthened and tedious silence. "You would have been amused, I think. A man sang very well."
"I was tired," she replied, negligently.

"There were loud laments, and many inquiries for Mrs. Messenger," he continued.

"Mrs. Messenger is obliged;" she looked at him for one moment, and then dropped her eyes.

A voice broke in here cold and harsh:

"Are you going to this tomfoolery to-night, sir Geoffrey?"

Sir Geoffrey Denvil turned to his host.

"Yes," he said drawlingly. "Are you?"
"Surely you have known Mr. Messenger long enough, Sir Geoffrey, to know what a futile question that is," she spoke very quietly.

Sir Geoffrey did not reply.

"Why not speak the truth," sneered Mr. Messenger suddenly, "and

tell Sir Geoffrey why I don't go."

"I doubt whether it would entertain Sir Geoffrey," she replied slowly. "We will put it to the proof," said her husband, an angry gleam in his pale eyes. "I don't go to these grand houses because I am not asked My wife is good enough - I am not !" -that's all.

"I think you have the best of us, Messenger," Sir Geoffrey remarked easily, stroking his mustache to hide the expression on his face. "It is

confoundedly bot at these entertainments."

Mr. Messenger did not reply.

"What a thorough outsider the man is!" was Sir Geoffrey's inward thought, while he drank with much approbation the costly wines provided for his delectation by the "outsider."

"Did I tell you," said Mrs. Messenger, after a pause, "that I am in-

vited to Deer Castle for the autumn?" Sir Geoffrey looked up quickly.

" And you will go?"
"Yes."

Mr. Messenger's eyes met Mrs. Messenger's for one instant.

"My wife is mistaken," observed the host slowly. "She will not go to Deer Castle this autumn, Sir Geoffrey."

The white fingers closed on the bread crumbs suddenly.
"You see," she said, turning to her guest, "I was mistaken. It is fortunate," laughing lightly, "that I have Mr. Messenger always by my side to correct my faults."

Sir Geoffrey consulted his menu. Dinner continued in silence. To Mrs. Messenger the meal was a perfect farce—she ate nothing. As the

butler withdrew she rose.

"I will leave you to your cigars and wine," she said, with a faint

Sir Geoffrey hurried to the door, as she swept towards it.

Mr. Messenger rose punctiliously, but did not move from the table, as his wife passed him.

A soft whisper fell on her ear as she stood beside Sir Geoffrey.

"I will follow in one moment."

She made no sign, but passed through the doorway, turned to the broad staircase, and mounted it slowly.

On the first landing she met her maid bearing her wraps,

" Madam wishes her burnous?"

"Yes," she said hurriedly; "wait for me here, Rosalie; I am going

for one moment to my room.

The maid elevated her well-defined brows as she watched the slight figure disappear. She would have elevated them still more if she could have seen her languid mistress fling herself down beside a couch and moan aloud as if in pain.

"Give me strength - let me live!" she prayed. "I have been wicked, sinful, wrong. I have prayed for death so often; but oh, God, I repent! Give me help and strength in the future for my child's sake! Let me

atone for my neglect; let me cherish now this treasure."

She half rose from her knees, her hand pressed to her side.

Her face grew distorted and white.

She tottered to her toilet-table, scattered with costly trifles, and with one cold trembling hand opened a casket and took out a bottle.

"It comes worse to-night!" she murmured. "He warned me of agitation. More drops-I must take more drops, or this pain will kill me!"

She stood for several seconds, then poured a tiny dose out of the

bottle and swallowed it.

She put the glass down with shaking fingers, and waited.

The color came gradually into the pallid cheeks; she drew a long breath, another, then left the room.

The maid was waiting patiently for her mistress, leaning with characteristic coquetry over the banisters, to catch a glimpse of Sir Geoffrey's handsome face as she heard the gentlemen leave the dining-room.

Mrs. Messenger took her cloak from the maid, drew it round her with a slight shudder, and began to descend. On the top stair she stopped

suddenly.

am going to Lady Deere's ball. I shall be very late; you need not sit up."

"If madame would allow, my seester is en Londres ce soir." "And you would like to see her? Certainly, go by all means."

" Merci, madame."

In the hall Sir Geoffrey was waiting, when Mrs. Messenger appeared.

"He is gone," was his terse remark.

She shrugged her shoulders, and passed through the open door to her carriage.

Sir Geoffrey was about to step in after her when she placed an oppos-

ing hand on his arm.

"I am going first for Mrs. Coningham - you had better take a cab,

Sir Geoffrey stepped back at once and doffed his hat as the carriage rolled on.

His face was black with a frown; he moved on a few paces and lit his cigar, then his eye caught a hansom slowly creeping through the gloomy

square. He hailed it and drove away.

As the cab disappeared in the distance a form emerged from the dark shade of a neighboring portico; it stood for an instant watching the retreating vehicle, then walked quickly back to the house from which the carriage had just rolled away, opened the door with a latch-key, and entered the hall,

The light of the large lamp disclosed Mr. Messenger's thin face and pale eyes, and marked clearly the moodiness and gloom written on his features.

He walked slowly through the hall, up the staircase, still wearing the light overcoat he had donned when he had parted with Sir Geoffrey Denvil.

He met no one in the passage, though from below he caught the sound of voices — the servants were enjoying their leisure.

He passed the drawing-room, and halted before the heavy curtains that veiled the entrance to his wife's boudoir.

Mr. Messenger rarely entered that room. He hesitated now for an instant, then pushed aside the curtain, and turned the handle with a click.

He turned up the light, and then stood on the hearth-rug, with his back to the remnant of fire still burning, and contemplated the room with a curious expression on his face.

Exactly opposite to him on the wall hung two paintings, one repre-

senting a man with a clean-shaven face and sharp cold eyes.

It was himself, taken six years ago.

The other picture was that of a girl, young, fair, and lovely. Her great eyes gazed earnestly into the spectator's like sapphire stars; her mouth was parted with a smile, and disclosed teeth, white, even, small as There was a strong resemblance to the beautiful woman who had sat so listlessly through the long courses of dinner, but the pictured face was possessed of a happiness, a tender wistfulness, that were altogether wanting in the living one.

"How changed she is!" he muttered. "That is how she looked when she met her lover, curse him! Now her face is like a mask, but - I am her master; he can never possess her! I have paid dearly for my triumph!" He turned and walked to the writing-table with one backward glance at the lovely face. "But I would give it all again and again if she would

look like that in return."

Would he ever efface the memory of what she had lost?

His pale face flushed.

He let his eyes wander round the room.

Surely he had atoned; had she not luxury, splendor unequaled now, where before she had but scantiness and bare necessity?

What talisman did she possess that drew her away from her costly life.

that brought the longing for the days and things that were gone?

Suddenly, as if struck by a sudden idea, he ceased his walk and ap-

proached the writing-table.

He opened the drawers of the desk in succession; there was nothing in any of them that rewarded his search. In one, a profusion of cards invitations from high places for Mrs. Messenger - Mr. Messenger was not included.

He shut it with a savage click.

Another receptacle was stocked with dainty writing-paper; he had sent it in for her use two days ago. The third drawer contained a disordered mass of books and documents which he recognized at once as tradesmen's bills.

With an impatient "Pshaw!" and a half look of contempt for himself, Mr. Messenger rose and was about to leave the table, when a small cabinet, standing behind the inkstand, caught his eye. It was of plain wood, and looked strangely out of place amid its gorgeous surroundings.

He hesitated for one moment, then put his hand on the rough knob. It was locked. With one swift jerk he broke the tiny door, and a packet of letters, tied together, fell out.

His search was rewarded. Very white in the face, Mr. Messenger

tore aside the string and scattered the contents on the table.

About a dozen or so of short notes. He read them through carefully, placing them one on the other, as he had found them.

They were in a man's hand, written in a lover's strain. In one of the envelopes a withered flower was concealed, and attached to it was a scrap of paper bearing the inscription, "Given me by my darling last night."
Mr. Messenger's fingers shook as he held the dried, shriveled memen-

toes of the once living glowing thing; then, with a sudden movement, he swept all the letters into his pocket, replaced the cabinet, and was leaving the room with hurried steps when the door opened, and he came face to face with his wife.

### CHAPTER II.

Mrs. Messenger uttered a quick exclamation as she met her husband in the doorway of her boudoir. Her face was very pale; it grew a shade paler as she walked past him into the room and flung her rich mantle onto the couch.

"Do you want anything?" she said, seeing him stand silent and still.

"Why are you come home so early?" he returned, not moving; "is it possible the beautiful Mrs. Messenger can be spared?"

"I have torn my dress," she replied negligently, sinking into a chair,

"and must change it."

George Messenger approached his wife slowly; he cast one sharp glance at her.

"You have injured your flounce, I see," he said dryly, "not your dress.

Eight hundred pounds thrown away!"

She made no reply.

"It would be the same were it eight thousand pounds," he continued, frowning. "Your extravagance is something fearful, Beatrix!"

She sighed wearily, drew off her long gloves with a jerk, and flung them

on the table.

"I must put a stop to it somewhere. I am a rich man, but you ought to have married a Croesus."

"Can we not defer this disquisition on wealth until the morning?"

asked Mrs. Messenger, coldly.
"No, we cannot," he observed shortly. "It is fortunate you are returned, as I have a great deal to say to you; there is no opportunity like the present. Do you know what your dressmaker's bill amounts to?"

"I never trouble my head about it; it is for you to pay, not me." "Six hundred and forty-seven pounds in six months!" he said, biting his lip fiercely at her remark. "At this rate I shall soon be in the workhouse."

"What!" she looked at him quietly. "Are there no more people to

be robbed? Is your occupation gone?"

"Take care, Beatrix!" he replied in a voice hoarse with anger; "take care what you say."

"Why? It is the truth, is it not?"

She opened her fan and moved it to and fro leisurely as she spoke. Mr. Messenger took two hasty strides to the door, then came back again.

"I am determined," he said, speaking very low and quickly—"I am determined to come to an understanding with you; I will no longer be shown up to the world as your fool. I will let these fine people know, who come cringing to your feet, that I am master here, not you - that you have nothing; that you owe everything in the world to me; that for all your grand airs, if I chose, to-morrow you might be a pauper !"

"Don't you consider all this very unnecessary?" asked Mrs. Messen-

ger slowly.

"I don't care if it is. I am going to speak. You shall hear plain words for once. I'm getting tired of this life. Shunted off out of sight anywhere, while my wife gads about from one place to another; fills my house with whom she likes - men who are not even civil to me, and women who ignore my very presence."

"What do you want?" still waving her fan slowly.

"I want it all changed," said Mr. Messenger doggedly; "and what is more, I will have it, too! You've seen the last of your grand friends for some time to come; so make your mind easy on that point."

"Is that all?"

"Don't you find it enough?" he sneered.

"Your mood is peculiar to-night," Mrs. Messenger said quietly, "and must be treated accordingly. Just now you said I should hear plain words;" she shut her fan deliberately, and placed it beside her gloves. "In return, I will give you some. I, too, am tired of this life, Mr. Messenger. For six long years I have borne my burden in silence; now I shall speak. moment has come when I can no longer support the contempt - the loathing that fills my heart. I have sought to lose the degradation of being your wife by mingling in the world. It clings to me still—it will cling to me forever. Your deceit to me -your cruelty to my father, will live always, though, God knows, I have tried—earnestly tried to crush the memory of it. Because I have been silent, seemed cold, indifferent, you think I have no heart—no feeling. The tortures of purgatory cannot be greater than those I have endured since I became your wife. It was on a par with your mean, despicable character to rob my father — yes, rob," she repeated, as he savagely interrupted her, "for I know now the money, instead of disappearing, as you told him, in that disastrous speculation, simply enriched your own pocket — to work on a girl's generosity and love to induce her to marry you and save her father. I have only one single gleam of happiness in all my gloom — the thought that he never knew how wretched my life was."

He moved restlessly to and fro, biting his lip; but he made no

"What crime had I done?" she cried passionately and suddenly; "how injured you, that you should have acted as you did? Why did you come like a dark shadow to blot out all joy and light from my life?"

"Because I loved you," he said, coming to a stand-still; "loved you a thousand times more than that other for whom you still pine? Aye," he added, with a bitter sneer, "I am not blind. It is not regret for your father, nor distrust for me, that has darkened your life, I know."

"Loved me!" she repeated slowly, a great fire of contempt blazing in her eyes. "Loved me! Was there not some better way of winning me than eruelty and deceit? Did you think it likely I should prove a good wife when I learnt the truth - when I knew the man whom I had bound myself to forever was a liar, a --- "

Her words failed her; she turned aside.

"Bah!" he said coolly; "it is rather late in the day for these qualms of conscience. For six years you have stood by and seen me rob and lie without putting out a hand to protest. Instead of that, you have taken the money accruing from these violent measures, and spent it—spent it freely. I wonder you have not informed me of your great distaste to my profession before this. I would gladly have reduced your share in the expenditure. You must excuse me if I dismiss these remarks of yours as utterly absurd."

She did not reply, but gathering her dress in her hands, turned to the

"Where are you going?" he demanded sharply, moving from the fireplace.

"To my room. Kindly let me pass," as he stood before the door.
"No," he said huskily, locking the door, and putting the key in his pocket. "It is just beginning to get interesting. I thought I should break your calmness one of these days. Pray go on."

"I have nothing more to say," she replied coldly, returning to her chair; "but if you are anxious to speak, please be brief; I shall be late

for the ball as it is."

"The ball will do without you to-night," he answered. "I meant what I said a few minutes ago. You shall have no more of this sort of thing. Now, I know you in your true colors; you shall taste life in a different way, or you shall leave my house altogether to starve; go into the work-house - I care not which!"

"I have a more luxurious alternative than that," she said distinctly, letting her great eyes meet his. "Sir Geoffrey Denvil has done me the honor this evening to offer me his hearth and home as a protection."

He clenched his hands.

"Well, why not?" he said, hoarsely.

"Why not, as you say. I cannot sink lower in my own estimation." The sound of her clear cold voice struck him as a blow.

"And this from you!" he gasped rather than spoke; "the mother of my child!"

"Don't speak of her!" she answered in low concentrated tones. "It

is contamination to breathe her name at such a time!"

"I'll take care she does not run any risks now or in the future," he "After your words of to-night you are no longer exclaimed recklessly. fit to have charge of the child; not that that will trouble you much-for you never see her."

"Are your hands cleaner than mine?" she asked, rising to hide the agitation on her face. "Are you fit to watch and guard over so delicate a flower? Will not your coarse sordid nature soil her fair soul? She is a jewel too precious for you, or—or me. God help me!" she cried suddenly, "for I am a wretched woman."

"Perhaps this will help to console you," said the man, taking the

packet of letters from his pocket and flinging them into her lap.

She had sunk onto the couch, her white garments trailing around, her face buried in her hands.

As the letters touched her, her hands dropped. She gave one start, then approached him slowly.

"So," she said quickly, "you are a spy, too!"
"Yes, I am. Take the letters; heal your broken heart with their balm. It is this that has weighed you down all these long years, while I

believed in you - trusted my honor --- "

"Your honor!" she repeated scornfully. "Your honor! A man who lives on ill-gotten gains—lies—deceives—robs—to talk of honor! When I think of what I have lost through you—what I have made him suffer through you - tortured his great honest heart through your mean cruel nature — I am not sane. I could kill you! See," she passed rapidly to the fire, knelt by the fender, and pushed the packet of letters into the expiring embers - " see! I destroy these last treasures of him that I possess; and as they burn, the flame of my hate for you grows stronger and stronger. It will never die !"

She rose from her knees, leaned for one moment against the mantelshelf for support, then, seizing her wrap, turned to the door. "Please

give me the key," she said quietly.

Mr. Messenger stood motionless; he did not answer. "The key, if you please; I wish to go to my room." "You can stay where you are," he said, sullenly.

"Do you refuse to give me the key?"

"Then I shall ring the bell for the servants. They must break open the door."

She moved to the bell, but he darted forward and gripped her wrist. "You don't give yourself airs for nothing," he said, savagely; "the veil has dropped between us now; there is no occasion to mince matters. I am master, and I say you shall remain here - if needs be all night."

"Am I a dog to be treated like this?" she asked, looking at him with the loathing great in her eyes. "I am not afraid!" as he half lifted his hand, then let it drop again. "When a man has a useful thing, he is generally careful of it. You will not injure me. My face is too valuable. We have had enough of this for to-night," she added swiftly; "loose my hand!"

He made no reply, only tightened his hold. His face was white even to the lips. Their eyes met. Passion, revenge, anger in his—determina-tion, contempt, hatred in hers. So they stood for many seconds, the only sound in the room the silvery even ticking of the clock, and the loud quick breathing of the man.

Suddenly he released her with a muttered oath.

She staggered back. Her fan, gloves, cloak, slipped to the floor, while her hands tore at the lace round her throat.

A ghastly pallor settled on her face, her eyes glared. She tried to speak - no words came. She reached blindly for a chair, but before she could touch it she sank with a groan heavily to the ground.

Mr. Messenger stood by silent during her brief struggle, and after she

had fallen he made no effort to help her.

He wiped his brow with his handkerchief. The violence of his passion was fleeting. He felt cold and sick, and leaned against the mantel-shelf recovering.

His wife lay motionless. She had never stirred. Her face was hid-

den from him. The clock ticked on monotonously.

At last he moved. He stooped for her scattered things, put them on the table, then knelt beside the prostrate form, and tried to turn it.

With hands trembling with a great unconscious fear he lifted the head,

fallen on the delicate throat. Then, as his gaze met the wide staring eyes, the fallen jaw, he started to his feet with a stifled shriek, and staggered to a chair.

How long he sat he never knew, but his thoughts were a blank; they

could not stir beyond that awful thing lying before him.

Dead! She could not be dead; it was a faint; it could not be death. She was so young and beautiful. Could that quiet rigid form be the lovely living being of a few moments ago? With a sudden shudder he rose from his chair, stooped, and laid his hand upon her breast.

There was no response; it was cold, still as marble.

What must he do? Rouse the house? Send for aid? It was too late for that. He stood gazing down at the dead woman, rooted to the spot by the overwhelming terror that had come upon him.

What would be said if they found him alone in the room with her

dead form? He must save himself, but how?

Quick! let him think. He passed one clammy hand over his brow, then his resolve was taken. He dragged rather than lifted the body to the arm-chair, and placed the beautiful head turned from the light as if she were sleeping, then he paused.

The perspiration was trickling down his face; he lifted one of her cold hands; it was the one he had grasped between his own when her con-

tempt had lashed his anger to fury.

There were no marks on the white skin, no signs of their brief strug-He let the fingers slip through his, the arms dropped heavily on the satin skirt, the very shimmer of which sent a shudder through his frame.

Mr. Messenger replaced the chairs, flung his wife's cloak on the couch, her gloves and fan on the table. Then he stopped, sent a hurried glance around, drew a long breath, and turned to go.

He left the lamp burning high, searched his pocket for the key, and with one backward glance, slowly, noiselessly, unlocked the door, and then listened.

No one was about; a dim light pervaded the landing. He drew the

door after him and stole down the stairs through the hall.

He still wore his light overcoat. His hat was on a stand; he put it on, then gently unfastening the hall-door, peered into the gloom. Not a creature was near. He stepped out and pulled the door softly behind him.

It was a dark night. A small thin rain was falling. He stood for one instant on the steps, his heart beating loud and fiercely, his head swimming, his limbs trembling. Then his eye caught the gleam of carriagelamps creeping near. He steadied himself by a pillar, and descended to the street.

The carriage progressed nearer; he knew it; it was his own, wait-

ing for the mistress that would never enter it again.

With a swift thought he stepped into the road, smeared his boots with the soft mud, then walked back slowly to the house. The carriage had just pulled up as he arrived.

The coachman recognized him, and touched his hat; the footman was

seated on the box also, holding the umbrella over his fellow servant.

"What are you waiting for, Evans?" asked Mr. Messenger abruptly. "For missus, sir; she've been gone in most an hour," returned the man. "Ah, she will be with you directly, I expect. A wet night," said his

master, as he returned to mount the steps.

"Yes, sir; and cold, sir," replied the coachman, whose temper was not improved by the weather.

Mr. Messenger nodded, and went slowly up the steps. As he reached the door he uttered an exclamation loud enough for the men to hear.

"How tiresome! I have forgotten my latch-key," at the same time ringing the bell sharply, and knocking loudly.

The door was opened by the butler.

"I have forgotten my key," repeated Mr. Messenger in answer to the man's surprised look.

He never, by any chance, summoned a servant to admit him.

The man stood undecided, seeing the carriage waiting.

"Shall I shut the door, sir?" he asked.

"Certainly. Why not?"

"I thought perhaps Mrs. Messenger was coming in," explained the butler, closing the door.

"Did you not let her in just now? Evans tells me he has been waiting

for an hour."

The butler stared at this remark.

"I ain't opened the door to a soul, sir," he replied, decisively.

Mr. Messenger smiled very faintly.

"Some one else must have admitted her," he said slowly. "I don't suppose your mistress has come in through the keyhole, Bailey. I am going to my study for a few minutes. I have an important letter to write. Tell Rosalie to ask Mrs. Messenger to speak to me on her way down."

He turned away, and passed the bottom of the stairs with averted eyes

and a sick, cold heart, while the butler ran down to the kitchen.

Presently he returned, and knocked at the study door.

"Mademoiselle have gone out, sir. Cook says she told her Mrs. Messenger gave her leave; and borrowed mademoiselle's latch-key to let herself in with, sir."

"Very well, Bailey; I will go up myself."

As the man retired he rose hastily, and crossed the room to a side-table. A case of spirits was standing on it. He poured out a glass of raw

brandy, and swallowed it.

The fearful dread was creeping on him again. Must he face that awful still figure, meet the gaze of those staring eyes — distorted likeness of the wondrous violet stars he knew so well?

He opened the door, and walked into the hall.

The butler was hovering outside.

"I waited to catch missus," he said, "and give her your message, sir."

"Thank you, Bailey; I will give it myself."

He ran quickly up the first flight; then, as the bend in the staircase hid him from the man's view, he stopped and clutched the banisters for assistance.

Slowly with leaden feet he mounted the few remaining stairs. There was the door. He drew his breath in short hard gasps, as he advanced nearer and nearer. He was once more on the grim threshold of death.

Suddenly he gave a start. What was that?

A small tired voice fell on his ears:

"Boofical mammie. Rica come a boofical mammie. Rica come—"
At his feet was a little white figure nestled sleepily in the folds of the
curtain. With a terrible pang at his heart he stooped and gathered the
child in his arms.

"What are you doing here?" he cries harshly, almost shaking her.

The little mouth puckered up, the tears melted in the great violet-gay eyes; so like, yet so unlike those silent ones within.

"Rica come a mammie," the little voice whispered.

Clutching the small form still in his arms, Mr. Messenger went to the top of the staircase.

"Bailey!" he called loudly.

"Yes, sir."

"Where is the nurse? I find Miss Ulrica wandering in the passage.

Fetch her at once."

He stood silent as the man disappeared. Rica lay passive in his arms, her eyes wide open and fixed on his face, her little hands clutched tightly together.

Rapid footsteps on the stairs were soon heard, and nurse appeared

very red and cross.

"I never knew of Miss Rica to do such a thing before," she said as Mr. Messenger transferred his burden to her arms. "I left her sleeping soundly. Naughty girl! I'm ashamed of you."

"Mammie - boofical mammie!" sobbed the child.

"That's it," cried the nurse, turning to her master; "Mrs. Messenger came up to-night and woke her in her first sleep; it don't never do children

good to be 'xcited."

He made no reply, but pushed aside the curtain and put his hand on the boudoir door. Nurse was slowly carrying her charge up to the nursery again when a cry sudden and awful rang through the silence. She ran down hastily and met her master in the doorway white and trembling.

"Lor', sir, what is it?" she exclaimed, letting Rica slip involuntarily

from her arms to the ground.

The child ran swiftly across the soft carpet to the white-robed figure

in the chair.

"Boofical mammie!" she whispered, patting the gleaming satin with her white hand. "Rica come a mammie."

Nurse took two strides toward the chair and stooped down over her

mistress.

"Merciful Heavens, she's dead!" she exclaimed with a great shudder, and snatching the child to her arms she turned to the door, passed the sunken form of her master crouched on a chair, onto the stairs, uttering loud cries to rouse the household

### CHAPTER III.

The morning broke bright and sunny after the night of horror. Nurse bathed and dressed her charge slowly, frequently lifting the little figure on her knee, and pressing it to her heart. A great dread was filling her that she would be separated from the child, and she realized almost for the first time how warmly her small charge had entwined herself in her affections. Rica went through her toilet quietly, wondering just a tiny scrap why nursie kissed her so often, but she nestled onto the motherly knee and was deep in the middle of a very thrilling story when the door opened and Rosalie appeared, her face quite discolored with tears.

"Madame la bonne, the docteurs wish la bas."

Nurse rose with a sigh, while Rica went at once to the maid.

"Poor child!" murmured Rosalie, stooping to let the child play with her bright chatelaine. "Will madame permit me to carry Miss Rica?"

"Yes, if you like," said nurse, the horror of the moment pushing on one side her aversion to the foreigner; "but she can walk. You will find her rather heavy."

Rica, however, was lifted by the kind-hearted Rosalie and borne down

the stairs to the library.

The room was full when they arrived. A gray-haired man was talking earnestly to a tall young one with kind eyes but plain, earnest face.

They were the two doctors. The servants of the household were clus-

tered together by the door.

There was a little murmur and rustle as nurse appeared.

The younger doctor came forward to meet her. Rosalie stood apart, still holding Rica in her arms. Nurse gave her account clearly and decisively.

"And you say your little charge had wandered down to the boudoir?" asked the older man after they had heard all. "Was your mistress in the

habit of having her there?"

"No, sir; I can't think what came to Miss Rica, except, as I told you just now, her — Mrs. Messenger came up-stairs last night to see Miss Rica, and must have excited her."

Bailey and then the coachman were questioned, and the two doctors conferred together; the servants were dismissed except the nurse, and a messenger was sent to the study to ask Mr. Messenger if he would receive the medical men.

He answered the summons himself, and advanced slowly into the room. He acknowledged the doctor's presence by a slight bow. His face was very white; he still wore his evening dress; he had paced his study all night.

"We are arrived at the conclusion that Mrs. Messenger's death was caused by heart disease, accelerated by excitement," said the older man, with a touch of pity in his voice.

"Can you give us information on this point, Mr. Messenger?" asked

the younger doctor in sharp clear tones. "None," replied Mr. Messenger.

"Dr. Bradbury has no former knowledge of Mrs. Messenger, but I am well acquainted with her constitution; she has been consulting me for the last six months," continued the young man.

Mr. Messenger raised his eyes and looked at the speaker. "I did not know that," he said slowly. "What - what for?"

"She suffered from aneurism of the heart," replied the other, "but, with care, might have lived for many years; that is what makes me positive that she received some very severe mental or bodily shock that caused her

"I know of none," said Mr. Messenger, after a short pause, speaking mechanically. "I left the house last night before she - she did; she appeared in good health then."

"Where was she going?"

"To some theatricals at Lady Trillington's, and later in the evening to a ball."

"She must have returned home to change her dress, her maid sur-

mises," observed Dr. Bradbury, "as the one she wore was torn."

"Have you sent to inquire at Lady Trillington's whether anything happened there?" inquired the young doctor.

"Yes," replied Mr. Messenger; "the maid's idea was verified. My wife tore her lace flounce, and came home to change her dress for the ball. That is all they know."

"We need detain you no longer, Mr. Messenger," said Dr. Bradbury kindly; "pray accept my sincerest sympathy with you in your sad bereave-

ment."

The younger man said nothing, but watched the retreating form with

a curious expression.

"Are you not satisfied?" asked Dr. Bradbury, noting his colleague's face as he drew on his gloves and prepared to depart.

"No," replied the other shortly.

Nurse stood respectfully as the gray-haired doctor passed her, and as the door closed behind him she moved towards the young one.

"What do you think, sir?" she asked, hurriedly.

"I am positive the poor lady received some shock or suffered some severe mental strain and excitement," he answered; "I am not certain, of course, but I have strong doubts of her dying in that chair."

Their eyes met; nurse involuntarily clasped Rica's little hand.

"But as that can't be proved, it is useless pressing it. Mrs. Messenger was a very beautiful woman," he added abruptly.

"Yes," said the nurse.

"But what an unhappy look there was in those glorious eyes!" His own fell at that moment on Rica's upturned face. "Merciful Heavens—how like!" he exclaimed, lifting the child to the table, "and what is your name?"

" Rica."

"You are a dear little mite," said the doctor gravely; "young to be left in this cruel world without a mother. I should like to pop you in my pocket and carry you away."

Rica contemplated him silently for two or three minutes, then suddenly

lifted her mouth up for a kiss.

"Well, I never!" ejaculated nurse; "I never knew her to do that

afore! She've took to you, and no mistake, sir."

"I am fond of children," replied the young man, stroking the little brown head, and looking at her with a smile that transfigured his plain face; "she must come and see me sometimes."

"May I make so bold as to ask you where you live, sir?"

"Just a few doors above this; my name is Strong, Guy Strong. If she should want anything, send in to me; my mother would like to see the little one, I know."

He lifted Rica down from the table, patted her cheek, and turned to the door. Nurse followed him slowly; she dimly felt that with his depart-

ure would come some fresh blow.

The days that followed were gloomy and depressing. The servants wandered about the house soft-footed and low-voiced, their occupation gone. Mr. Messenger shut himself up in his library, and, save for his law-yer, saw no one.

The morning of the funeral broke cold, cheerless, and wet. Rica sat by the nursery fire crooning a lullaby to her doll, all unconscious of the

tragedy that was being acted in her little life.

It was a dreary, wretched day to nurse, and all too soon the fears that

had assailed her were realized.

That evening she was summoned to the library, paid her wages, and

cursorily told to pack her boxes and depart next day, as the house would be shut up. Her fellow-servants were treated the same.

Nurse stood by the table as her master counted out the small pile of

gold and silver, and pushed it across to her.

"Am I really to go, sir?"

"Of course," Mr. Messenger returned quietly. "I leave England tomorrow night. The house will be shut up before I depart."

"And—and Miss Rica?" faltered the woman, striving hard to overcome her disappointment and pain.

"She will be well looked after. You may go, Mrs. Brown."

The pale eyes met hers for a minute, then fell.

"Isn't she going with you, sir? Oh, you will never leave her alone with strangers! She will pine and die - I know she will!"

"I have nothing further to say to you; you can go, Mrs. Brown," he

repeated quietly.

"P'rhaps, sir, you don't know as how Mrs. Messenger, the night she she died, gave Miss Rica into my charge, sir, and begged me never to leave

"Mrs. Messenger is dead," said her master coldly, bending for an instant over his writing, "and I am the proper person to look after Miss Must I ask you again, Mrs. Brown, to leave me?"

"No, sir: I'm going."

And nurse went away with quivering lips.

She held up till she reached the nursery, then she sank on a chair and

gave vent to her sorrow in tears.

Early in the morning nurse rose softly, packed her belongings, casting many tender glances at the soft little face she loved so well, and then stole down-stairs. Most of her fellow-servants had left the house, and gloom and silence reigned oppressively everywhere.

On tiptoe nurse progressed through the hall, let herself out into the street, and with hurried steps made her way along the square to a large

house. She rang the bell and asked to see the doctor.

The young man came quickly into the morning-room with concern on

"She is not ill?" he said, as nurse rose respectfully. "No, sir; but she's going to be taken from me."

Dr. Strong looked grave.

"Where is she going?"
"I don't know." Nurse's voice was trembling. "I came to see you, sir, to ask you if it would be any use if you were to speak to Mr. Messenger and ask him to let me stay with her. I can't bear to leave my precious lamb all alone with strangers; she ain't used to it, sir. Besides, her poor mother's last words to me -I can't forget them."

"I will see what I can do, but I am afraid I shall not be able to manage much," replied Dr. Strong slowly. "Did Mr. Messenger say you

must go to-day?"

"This very day, sir; he wouldn't even hear me when I asked to stay with Miss Rica. What he's going to do with her I can't think; he ain't got no relations, and I never he rd of any belonging to the poor lady; but my poor baby is too little to be thrown with strangers. Oh, dear me!"

"Well, Mrs. Brown, I will run in and see what I can do some time this morning; unfortunately, just at this moment. I am summoned to a most important case, and I cannot spare the time - indeed, I must start

at once or I shall be very late."

"Thank you, sir, and God bless you for your kindness! He is a cruel hard man to --- " Nurse broke down and burst into tears. "I beg your pardon, sir, but I can't help myself."

"Don't apologize, Mrs. Brown; I quite feel for you. Now I must

go. I will certainly look in as soon as possible."

Nurse took her way home, feeling much comforted.

As the morning wore on, and Dr. Strong did not come, she grew uneasy again, and hope fled forever when the nursery door was opened and Mr. Messenger appeared, pale and cold-looking.

"Put Miss Ulrica's clothes into a box at once," he said quietly, and

when that is done, you can go, Mrs. Brown."

Nurse hesitated.

"If you would only let me stay, sir," she pleaded.

"I thought we settled that last night," said the master, looking quietly er. "Please do as I ask you at once. Ulrica, come to me."

The child clung to her nurse; the memory of his harsh words and cruel white face of one night before came back to her, and she shrank from him.

"Temper - eh?" murmured Mr. Messenger as he turned away; well, that will soon be cured. In half an hour, Mrs. Brown, I shall

expect you."

Nurse did his bidding with her eyes blinded with tears, then sorrowfully and slowly put on the child's outdoor garments and tied on her own bonnet.

"Go a ta-ta?" asked Rica.

Nurse stooped and pressed a farewell kiss to the sweet baby mouth. "May God bless and preserve you!" she said with a sob; then, lifting Rica in her arms, she carried her down-stairs.

True to his word, about the middle of the day Dr. Strong hurried to the large house in the square to plead Nurse Brown's cause.

He knocked loudly at the door, which, after some moments, was

opened with much unbolting and rattling of chains.

"Can I see Mr. Messenger?" he asked of the old woman who appeared.

She shook her head.

"He's been gone this half-hour, sir."

"And nurse — Mrs. Brown?"

"I don't know her, sir; but there's no one 'ere but me and my 'usband. We're taking care of the 'ouse for a month; Mr. Messenger may come back then."

"Did he go away alone?" asked the young man, a faint hope lingering

that the nurse might have gone after all with the child.

"Yes, sir; leastwise, he only 'ad his little girl, sir — that's all."

Guy Strong pushed a shilling into the rough hand, and descended the steps slowly as the door was closed again, securely chained and bolted.

### CHAPTER I.

IT was winter-time. Jack Frost had been very ousy, discarding for the while his delicate touches and white feathery glistening adornments, but binding the land in a sullen black band, that chilled the marrow of the rich, and brought misery and despair to the poor.

The little village of Wakehurst was almost ice-bound, the small ponds and brooks were frozen hard, and the green turned into one large slide,

whereon the children enjoyed themselves vastly.

The sun had refused to shine all day; everything was dull and cold—

bitterly cold.

The afternoon was fast sinking into evening. All those who could were

crouched round the blazing fires.

On the lake of Wakehurst Park there was a merry party. Chinese lanterns abounded, sledges were scattered about, and in a marquee on the island was spread a splendid collation—cakes, tea, coffee, and—the irony of the thing! strawberry and cream ices. Groups of brightly-dressed, carefully-furred damsels skimmed over the smooth surface, attended by

their cavaliers in goodly numbers.

It was a pretty sight, and so thought one solitary spectator. Not much to look at — a thin, small form, with poor little arms, protruding from the sleeves of an old jacket, clasped firmly around several packets denoting in their blue-paper covers recent acquaintance with the grocer's shop; feet clad in worn boots three sizes too big for them, and through which the cruel stones penetrated at every step, and the thin trembling limbs only half covered with a shabby skirt.

The face was thin and gaunt, with great eyes that looked so hungry, and

a mass of straight dark hair hanging roughly under the tattered hat.

How came such an object to be wandering on the brink of the glittering lake, where all was bright, and merry sounds of laughter mingled with the soft delicious strains of music?

It was a private park with all kinds of traps to catch the unwary trespasser. Yet here stood a most undeniable vagrant, coolly watching the

scene with no intention of moving.

Once or twice as the bitter wind rustled through the empty trees, and nipped her frozen limbs, she shivered, but still she stood on, unheeded, unnoticed and lonely.

Suddenly in one of his nearest circles to the shore a boy caught sight of

this figure. He skated up to the edge.

"What are you doing here?" he asked imperiously. "Don't you know you've no right to be in the park? Go away at once!"

"I ain't doing no harm," retorted the girl sullenly, "let me alone!"
"But you must go," reiterated the boy; "you're jolly cheeky too! I'll

tell my father, and he'll soon make you move."

For answer the girl stooped deliberately, picked up a stone with her chilled fingers, and launched it at her adversary. Fortunately it missed its aim, but none the less infuriated the boy.

"You little vixen!" he cried, hurriedly unfastening his acme skates, and springing on the ground. "How dare you do that! I'll—"

"Take care, Basil, or you will injure me," cried a laughing voice. "What's the matter?" Then catching sight of the small shrinking figure: " What, strike a girl, Basil?"

"It's all very well, Uncle Guy, but she flung a stone first - she did,

honor bright!"

The new comer bent to the sullen face.

"Why did you throw a stone? Don't you know it is very naughty?"

he said kindly.

"I weren't doing no harm; I climbed the railing," muttered the child, "and he came up and sent me along. I was only looking at the people, and was thinking they were fairies."

"Poor little girl! Come, Basil, be generous; see how cold she is - take those parcels from her, and then we will give her a nice cup of hot coffee to

warm her.

The boy hesitated a minute, then held out his hand to the ragged maiden. She lifted her great eyes to him for one second, and then placed her cold fingers in his.

"That's right. You can leave her parcels in this corner, Basil. They will be quite safe. Come, little girl."

He smiled kindly down at her, and the waif trotted over the smooth

surface, trying to keep up with his long steps.

There was a murmur of confused sounds from the tent as they advanced towards it. But as they entered the warm well-lighted interior the buzz of conversation ceased.

"Guy!" "Dr. Strong!" "Good Heavens! What is it?" were the vari-

ous exclamations.

The young man laughed, and lifted his companion onto a chair, and moved to the table to get some of the delicacies displayed.

"Only a stray sparrow," he said lightly. "Ladies, you spare so many crumbs for your pretty red-robbins, I thought you might be generous also to a little brown bird. Mother, this is in your line, I think?"

A lady with a kind motherly face rose at once, and, taking a piece of cake from the table, sat down beside the child, and offered her a piece.

The little brown hand went out and seized the cake, beginning to attack it violently, eating as though she had seen no food before that day.

"Let her have another piece, Guy," said Mrs. Strong as the last crumb disappeared.

Dr. Strong looked up into the gray eyes. "Would you like some more?" he asked.

"Yes," replied the child.

"You should say, 'yes, thank you,' or 'yes, if you please,' " observed a

little girl who had trotted up to the group.

She was about the same age as the waif, but such a contrast! A dainty blue velvet coat trimmed with soft grebe feathers reached to the top of her high boots; she wore a round velvet cap on her yellow curls, her face was piquante and fresh-colored, but spoilt by a precocious look and the unmistakable vanity that gleamed in her large blue eyes.

The other child looked straight at her with her great gray orbs, but said

nothing.

Dr. Strong moved away with the empty cup, and his mother, all heedless of the waif's unkempt appearance, lifted her to her knee and tried in a coaxing way to make the child talk.

"She is crying, Guy," she said as her son returned; "I wonder what ails her?"

"Tired, poor little thing! She must get on her way home; it is nearly half-past six, and quite dark."

The child suddenly looked up.

"Half-past six," she cried, then with a fresh burst of tears: "Oh, she will be so cross, and—and—I shall get a beating again."

Dr. Strong picked her up in his arms.

"Where do you live?" he asked gently, "and what is your name?"
"I live with Mrs. Coxon, 23 Ivy Leigh," the child whispered between her sobs.

"Well, I will take you home and see you don't get scolded. What is

your name?"

"Rica Messenger."

Dr. Strong started as though he had been shot, and gazed long at the child as if he doubted the truth of this statement. Then memory came slowly back to him. Those great gray stars—how could he have forgotten them?

His mother watched his face keenly.

"Do you know the child, Guy?" she asked.

He turned to his mother.

"I am going to take her home," he said quickly; "I shall not be long."

He strode away over the ice, stooped for the various parcels, and carrying Rica lightly and easily, he passed into the dark shadows of the wood.

A fire of indignation burned in his heart. Where was the man whose

care it should have been to shield this small treasure from harm?

He glanced at the little face pressed against his rough coat; the moon had risen silvery and beautiful, and it shone on the small mouth, still tremulous with crying, on the heavy fringed eyelids. She had fallen asleep.

It was a pity to wake her, but as they emerged from the park, he had no other alternative. The road diverged, he did not know which turning to take, so very gently he roused the tired little frame.

She started up in affright, and he felt the wild beating of her heart

through her thin garments.

"Don't beat me," she moaned. "I'll never do it again, Miss Emma. I'll be good. Yes—I'll be good. Don't!" the voice died away in a wail.

He bent down and kissed the little face. "No one shall beat you," he said tenderly.

"Tell me which way to go."

Rica looked up, and, realizing it was only a dream, gave a great sigh of relief.

She pointed to the road on the right.

He passed several small detached cottages, and at length came to a row of better houses with strips of gardens in front.

Rica slipped from his arms, and led him to the end house of the row.

Scarcely had he knocked before the door was opened roughly, and a voice exclaimed:

"Yes, it's her! You wicked, naughty child!" Then, catching sight of the tall form standing by: "You've nearly frightened us to death! Where have you been, Rica?"

"Allow me to explain," said Dr. Strong, easily. "I found this little girl wandering about alone, very cold and tired. It is just a little late for

a child like her to be out."

"Oh, thank you, sir," said a voice softly. The owner was a small, thin woman, dressed neatly in black, with a widow's cap on her snowy hair.
"Thank you so much." We were getting quite nervous; she has been gone

"Well, I should put her to bed now. Here are her parcels. Good-

night, little one!" he stooped to kiss the child.

Rica clung to him convulsively, almost in terror. "Come to Rica soon," she cried. "Do come!"

" I will come very, very soon."

"She shall go to bed, sir, nice and warm. Good-night, sir; and thank you again."

"Good-night."

The door closed, the child was dragged into an inner room; one of Mrs. Coxon's small bony hands pressed close over her mouth.

Another woman was here standing by the door. She had been listening

to the recent conversation.

"Who was it mother?" she asked, eagerly.

The old woman tore the tattered hat roughly from the child's head and

threw it in a corner.

"Some one from the Hall, I think," she replied; then, seating herself by the table, she placed Rica, trembling and frightened, before her. "Now, tell me the truth! Where have you been? Answer me at once," with a shake.

"To Mr. Bill's for sugar and tea," said Rica, her small hands clutched

together.

"Well, and what kept you so long?" continued Mrs. Coxon, her lips drawn very thin, an angry gleam in her eye.

"Mr. Bill was out, I had to wait," said Rica, glibly.

"That's a lie! I've sent to Mr. Bill, and you left the shop two hours ago. Now, will you tell me where you've been?"

"Nowheres," the child answered sullenly.

"You won't tell me? Then I must make you. Emma, fetch me the cane!"

The child fell on her knees with a shrill cry and clutched the other's

hand.

"Oh, no -no, don't beat me, dear Mrs. Coxon! I'll be so good. I'll never do it again - only don't beat me! I'll tell you now. Oh Miss Emma - Miss Emma!" as the pale-faced young woman advanced with the cane. Mrs. Coxon, heedless of the child's tears, turned up her sleeve and took the cane in hand.

"Take off your clothes," she said quietly.

Rica's voice died away in the paroxysm of tears and sobs that almost

choked her.

She struggled with her pitiless foe, but Miss Emma's cool small hands tore her thin clothes from her body, and the cane fell in thick steady blows until Mrs. Coxon, apparently satisfied with the severity of her punishment, pushed the child sobbing and writhing from her.

"Now go to bed. I'll teach you to tell lies again. To bed, d'ye

The poor little hands, with great weals on their frozen surface, stooped

for the scattered garments with subdued moans and terrified looks, just as a knock sounded at the door.

Miss Emma stood before the child's shivering form, hiding it with her voluminous draperies as her mother went to answer the summons.

It was Guy Strong.

"I find I have one of the little girl's packages in my coat-pocket," he began, politely; but before he could proceed farther Rica had slipped past Miss Emma, and with a burst of sobs clung desperately to his knees.

"Why, little one!" he said, bending down; then as his eyes rested on her bruised skin, the marks of the cruel cane even across her face, he turned on Mrs. Coxon swiftly. "What have you been doing to the child?"

Mrs. Coxon made no reply, but put out her hand to push Rica into the room, when Guy Strong picked the child up in his arms, and strode to the

light.

"So, this is how you treat children!" he said, turning to the disconcerted women, his heart surging with anger and contempt. "Beat this poor mite till she falls with exhaustion to the ground! Shame on you both for your cruelty! Look at her flesh, bruised—almost torn! Good God, and this is a Christian country!"

"I don't know who you are, or what right you have to come into the house in this way," said Mrs. Coxon, white with rage. "Do you know I can give you up to the police for doing it? I'll thank you to go away at

once, or I'll call some one to turn you out."

Guy was patting and soothing the terrified child; he looked up quietly as

she finished.

"Outside there is a policeman; call him in if you like, or shall I do so? It will go hard with you, Mrs. Coxon, if you are called up before Sir Thomas Morne to answer to this charge; remember I shall be a witness against you."

She shrank back, cowed for the minute. Then, as she saw him take off

his thick coat and wrap it round Rica, she exclaimed:

"What are you going to do?"

"Take her away," he returned quietly.

"She shall not go. I will not let her. She shall go to no one but her father."

"I will make it right with Mr. Messenger. Have no fear on that

score."

The woman suddenly lost her bravado.
"Oh, sir," she cried, "you will not make mischief with Mr. Messenger?
You will ruin us. Oh, sir, please do not harm us; we are poor, and indeed we love Rica; it was only a --- "

"Hypocrite!" said Guy contemptuously. "Had you pity for this child a moment ago? No! As you treated her, so I will treat you. If you have no humanity in your bosom, you shall learn what justice can do."

"You shall not take her!" screamed the woman, now thoroughly enraged, as he turned to the door.

"Must I call the policeman?"

She slunk away.

"I will send for her clothes in the morning."

"I'll be even with you for this!" muttered Mrs. Coxon. "You are at liberty to do what you will," he answered coldly; "but this child shall never be in your care again - be sure of that."

He stepped into the moonlight, and pulled the door behind him.

Guy walked on hurriedly for some minutes, then stopped and looked at his burden.

Rica's eyes were fixed on his face. She put one little hand out and touched him.

"Rica loves you," she said, with a catching sob in her voice, "loves you

-you are good."

Dr. Strong lost no time in hunting up George Messenger. He discovered him with some little difficulty, and then in plain, not to say forcible terms, described the condition in which he had found the neglected child, and the cruelty that had been practiced on her.

Rica, meanwhile, remained at Wakehurst Park, under the care of Guy's sister, Lady Morne, where, amid the luxury and tenderness lavished on her, she grew strong and happy.

Both Dr. Strong and his mother begged to have care of the child, but to these entreaties George Messenger turned a deaf ear, and he carried Rica away with him to Paris, where he had continually resided since the time of his wife's death.

One man, a Sam Loudon, to whom, strangely enough, Messenger seemed to turn as a sort of a friend (for friendship with him had always been an empty term), was perhaps the only soul who knew the truth, but he kept it to himself, and would say nothing but that "Messenger's little girl was

the dearest and sweetest in the world!"

Rica was afraid of her father; she did not love him, and was glad to be away from his cold keen eye, with her bonne, a kind-hearted French woman; and George Messenger troubled his head little about his child. She was fed, clothed, and taught; she wanted no more. He cut off all communication with Dr. Strong; he wanted no one or nothing to interfere with him.

One night, as Rica sat playing with her nurse, her father suddenly appeared, and to the bonne's astonishment, commanded her to dress the child

in her outdoor garments, and that quickly.

They went some way, then Mr. Messenger stopped and hailed a fiacre. Rica was lifted onto the seat, her father stepped in after her, and away they rattled past the brilliantly-lit shops, the streets thronged with passengers, the cafes and theatres; on till they came to a quieter part of the city, where the lamps showed only rows of houses, and the pavements were deserted.

At last, after a long drive, the cab drew up in a dingy court with houses so high and close together that Rica could only see a strip of sky as she

stood on the pavement and looked up.

Her father paid the man, then waited until the vehicle, with many ejaculations and extraordinary cries from the coachman, had been turned round in safety and driven away; then, taking Rica's hand, he mounted a few steps and knocked at the door.

It was opened abruptly by a short stout woman of the class Pauline called contemptuously "canaille," who, in answer to Mr. Messenger's quick

low inquiry, jerked her head backwards and uttered laconically:

"Au troisieme!"

At last they reached another landing, and, holding the expiring light high up, Mr. Messenger saw a door. He flung the match to the ground, trod on the dying sparks, then knocked sharply at the door.

A voice in English answered: "Come in."

He turned the handle and entered the room. A man was sitting in a

shabby arm-chair—a man with unshaven chin, ruffled hair, and clothes which, though they bore the unmistakable stamp of Saville row or Bond street, were yet creased and thick with dirt.

He was half lying, his feet supported on another chair.

Despondency and vexation were on his handsome, haggard face.

He jumped up hastily as Mr. Messenger entered, and came forward with

outstretched hands.

"This is good of you, Messenger," he said, quickly moving and speaking, despite his disheveled appearance, with an air of hauteur and tone; "very good of you to come and see a fellow when he's dead broke. I met Sam Loudon the other day, and sent you a message by him. I never imagined you would come. I know the world well now."

He spoke bitterly, pushing forward the arm-chair as he did so. Mr. Messenger drew off his gloves slowly; Rica was standing behind him, hidden by his tall form.

"Yes," was all he answered; "I got your message, and I am come."

"Thanks again. Will you not sit down?"

Mr. Messenger took a chair from the wall, and seated himself, saying as he did so:

"Come here, Ulrica."

The other started.

"What! Who is that?" he asked, hurriedly. Mr. Messenger pushed the child towards him.

"Do you see no resemblance, Sir Geoffrey?" he said.

Sir Geoffrey Denvil gazed at the small face before him; at the pale, almost transparent skin; the red tremulous lips, and lashes lying thick and dark on the smooth cheeks.

Rica slowly lifted her eyelids during the scrutiny, and met his startled

look as he exclaimed:

"Good God! how like ---"

Her father drew the child back to his knee.

"Yes, Ulrica is strangely like her mother," he observed in his quiet, cold way.

Rica was gaining courage, now the room was light; no horrible spectres

in dark corners to jump out and frighten her.

She looked round with a reassuring air. There were no pretty ornaments, and everything was crumbled and dirty.

Sir Geoffrey watched the child for two minutes in silence. He had sunk

back in his chair, and was shading his eyes with his hand.

"Yes," he said, after a pause, as if speaking his thoughts, "she is like. She will be very beautiful, too."

Mr. Messenger made no reply to this.

Sir Geoffrey kept his hand over his eyes for another new seconds, then hastily turning round, and pouring himself out a glass of water from a pewter jug on the table, he spoke quickly:

"Now to business. I am glad to meet you, Messenger, for I began to think you had deserted me. Do you know it is a whole year since you

have answered my letters - a whole, long, terrible year!"

"Yes," said George Messenger. He had all those letters safe at home.

"They were lost, I suppose, or never forwarded?" continued the other. "You have been moving about a good bit, they tell me. Have you been long in Paris?"

" Some time."

"Ah, and I did not know it! Messenger, I must have some money"he moved restlessly, and his fingers closed on the frayed arm of the chair - " on the same security as before."

"Yes," repeated George Messenger.

"Craven must die soon—they tell me he is paralyzed now—and Bulkeley will come to me. You know what that means? I have been writing and writing to you about this all the past year. Loudon will not advance a farthing. I tried my luck "-he laughed bitterly - "my luck at the table last night, and I am ruined -- I haven't a leg to stand on; even this hole will be no more my home after the end of the week."

He paused; the man before him made no sign.

"So you may imagine my relief when I met young Loudon, and he promised to give you my message. It was a glimpse of light in the awful hopeless gloom that has hung over my life these many months. You are the only man I know who will help me." He drew a long breath. "Great Heavens! when I think of the hundreds who toadied to me when I had plenty!—and there's not one—not one who would hold out a finger to me now, Messenger."

"You have a very poor belief in human nature, Sir Geoffrey," said Messenger slowly and quietry.

"It's proved by bitter experience," replied Sir Geoffrey gloomily; "but come, it's no use wasting time in regret - time just now is more than life almost! You will do this, Messenger — only another five hundred pounds, small to you but a gold-mine to me. Who knows — fate may be kinder, my luck may turn. I may win — win enough to redeem the whole and settle our long account. Then rest assured your kindness will never be forgotten."

He had risen in his excitement and was pacing the room.

"You will do this, Messenger? I have paper, and ink, and --"

" No."

The word fell like a thunder-bolt.

Sir Geoffrey stopped his hurried walk, his hands fell on the table, his face, white, haggard, grew even paler.

"No!" he repeated blankly as if doubting his ears; "no!"

"No," answered the other. "You have had the last penny you will ever receive from my hands. I came here to tell you so myself."

Sir Geoffrey looked across at him eagerly.

"I don't understand you," he said distinctly. "Do you mean you have only come here to push me backwards into the mire, not to give me a helping hand?" "I do."

The two men's glances met; the veil had fallen.

George Messenger's eyes gleamed with the triumph and hatred he felt. The whole appearance of the man was changed.

Rica shrank back, vaguely frightened at their silence.

"Take care!" broke out Sir Geoffrey, in hoarse tones. "I am not in a

mood to be trifled with!"

"I have no intention of trifling with you," answered the other fiercely. I have much to say that is not of a trifling matter. I repeat again, you will get no more money out of me - not because your security is false; I knew that when I advanced you money four years ago. But I let it pass; it served my purpose. Not because you are a liar and gambler, but -

" Well?"

"Because I hate you!" was the answer.

Sir Geoffrey laughed aloud.

"Hate me!" he cried contemptuously. "Go on; let me hear all! But, no! I see it very plainly; you are settling up the old score. The same longing to be quits with me lives yet, does it?"

Rica saw the veins swell on her father's brow. She was growing fright-

ened, and crept away from them into a corner.

Sir Geoffrey folded his arms and surveyed his opponent with a sneer on

his worn handsome features.

"Bah!" he said after a pause. "Who would have credited you with so much weakness? The man whom everybody thinks is made of gold and iron to bear within him a secret petty grudge against one who, after all, did him no injury — whose only fault lay in ——"

"Did him no injury!" broke in the other passionately. "You lying villian! Is it no injury to creep into a man's house to try and steal the most precious jewel it contains? Is it no injury to eat and drink of a man's best, and behind his back pour forth the poison of a tempter's

tongue? Is it ---"

"You allude to my friendship with Mrs. Messenger, I suppose?" interrupted Sir Geoffrey blandly, yet with an ugly look round his mouth. "I am sorry you distress yourself so much about so trivial a matter. Our in-

timacy was perfectly platonic, I can assure you."

"Liar!" hissed the other, now white with his pent-up passion. "I know all—have known it these four long years. You thought me blind, mad, a fool, perhaps, but I was none of these. I knew while you and the world laughed in your sleeve at me, she was a prize worth the winning; that while you took my money and turned your back on me, you were speaking openly to her. I know more. I know that the night of her death was the night you chose to suggest flight to her—to drag her down with you to shame and dishonor, and after she lay in her grave you gave no thought to her, but sauntered on through life as you had done before coming to me—to me—for help to keep you going! This has held me silent all these years. I knew the end must come. I have watched you sink lower and lower, till the moment came when I could curse you, as I do now! It was for this I brought my child—that she might see and know you as the man I hate, I curse!"

Rica had drawn near the bed and was grasping the dingy curtain; she understood nothing of their words, but their white faces warned her child-

ish instinct of danger, and she grew terrified.

Sir Geoffrey stood quite silent under the torrent of low quick words uttered in a voice so hoarse it would not have been recognized. The curious look round his mouth deepened; it was not pleasant to look at.

Suddenly, putting one hand on the table, he leant forward and looked

up into the other's eyes.

"You knew I suggested that night for our flight?" he repeated slowly. "How did you know it? It was only breathed half an hour before she left the Countess of Trillington's house. No one could know unless—unless she"—he hesitated, then said swiftly, "she told you of it. Ah, I see—I see it plainly; she told you, and you killed her!"

The vehemence of the man overwhelmed George Messenger. For one instant he forgot himself, while the terrible touch of fear that had come to

him that awful night encompassed his heart once more.

His face grew white, his hands trembled. It was enough for the eager

eyes opposite.

"That was it! there is guilt in your coward face. Now, George Messenger, do your worst; drag me down to the gutter if you will, you cannot drag me down to your level. With all my sins I am not a murderer. You bring your child to curse me—do you see"—he crossed the room swiftly, and seized the frightened form by the bed—"see how I can turn the tables! Look well at that —man!" he cried to Rica. "Remember what I say: that man killed y——"

The words died in his throat; the two men were locked in a deadly

struggle.

Rica stood for one instant paralyzed with childish terror, then as the sound of the gasping hoarse murmurings came from the white lips, as she caught a glimpse of her father's face, ghastly and awful, as she saw the stranger's hand still up to her father's throat, the flood of horror and fear welled into her mind, and, not knowing what she did, she beat her little hands against the door, uttering shriek after shriek till suddenly the frail barrier was broken down, and with a cry of glad recognition Rica clung to Sam Loudon's knees.

He pushed the child behind him, and with two well-planted blows

parted the panting murderous forms.

George Messenger staggered to a chair, while Sir Geoffrey stood wiping his brow hazily, his breath coming in quick, hurried gasps.

Behind Sam came the woman of the house excited, shrilly voluble,

gesticulating wildly.

Her entrance roused Messenger; as a blind man he groped for his hat and turned for Rica.

But Sam had her carefully shielded in his arms.

"No," he said decidedly and sternly, "you don't have her; if you can bring your child to such a place and such a scene, you ain't fit to have charge of her. I am going to take her home."

George Messenger made no reply; with a bent head and curiously vacant

expression he went slowly, almost painfully, out of the room.

Sir Geoffrey seized Sam's shoulder.

"Don't go, for God's sake!" he implored wildly; "or give me some money. This hag threatens to turn me out into the street. The room is damaged, she says. I owe her a month's rent. You know what that means. I shall have to go. For Heaven's sake give me some money, if only enough to take me over to England. Hang the consequences! Some one must help me there!"

Sam drew out his pocket-book.

"There," he said curtly, "get out of Paris as soon as you like. I came to tell you I have just heard Lord Craven is dead. The lawyers are looking for you. He has left you Bulkeley after all. Died before he could alter his will. Now let me pass."

He pushed the woman aside, and hurried down the stairs with Rica in his arms, while the sound of Sir Geoffrey's voice, exultant and loud, came

to his ears.

As he reached the street, Sam bent his head, and whispered a few loving

words to his precious burden.

She made no reply, and lay very still. As they approached a lamp-post Sam saw the cause. The past horror had been too much for the child. She had fainted.

### CHAPTER II.

YEARS rolled on. The scene changed. A lovely summer afternoon; the sun was hot, but its rays were tempered by a gentle breeze.

Spa was crowded.

The band was playing; children skipped about, pursued by shrieking voluble bonnes, and apparently life in Spa was all summer and sunshine.

Among the idlers sitting under the shady trees were two young men one almost a boy, the other a few years older, with a very handsome face, of the pure English type.

He had his arm in a sling, but was diligently assisting a crippled beetle

with the stick he held in the sound hand.

"I shall be awfully sorry to leave you, Jack," said the younger one slowly, as he watched his companion's sympathetic efforts. "I don't mind confessing I owe half of my enjoyment to you. It was awfully jolly run-

ning against you."
"Yes, it was a strange coincidence," observed the other, still intent on his beetle; "and yet I don't know why one should say that. The world is so small when one comes to know it. There," to the insect, "I think you are all right now. But must you go really, Basil?"

"Yes; I had a letter from my mother to-day, entreating me to come home; and you know I have had a jolly good holiday ever since old Drury

fell ill, and had to go back to England. Sir John Dunworthy shook his head.

"I have to go through another fortnight's course at the waters yet."

"But you have promised to stay with us at Wakehurst, remember," Basil Morne said quickly. "My mother insists on it."

"Very well," laughed the other; "when Lady Morne issues a command,

it must be obeyed.'

Basil made no immediate reply. His eyes were fixed on a small cortège approaching slowly.

A bath-chair, in which reclined a man with gray ashen face, a shaggy

beard, and eyes vacant, cold, and ugly. A servant in neat livery pulled the chair, and a girl walked beside it.

Basil turned quickly.

"Look, Jack?" he whispered. "Here she is again - the one I told you about. Now, isn't she simply lovely?"

Sir John Dunworthy did not move, but he gazed long at the girl as she

walked slowly past.

He saw her eyes as they wandered listlessly around -deep, almost violet-gray, shining like stars in their ivory setting, for there was not a shade even of color in the fair skin. It was a cream-white from cheek to the rounded throat that showed above the neat collar.

She was quite unconscious of the long and many looks of admiration

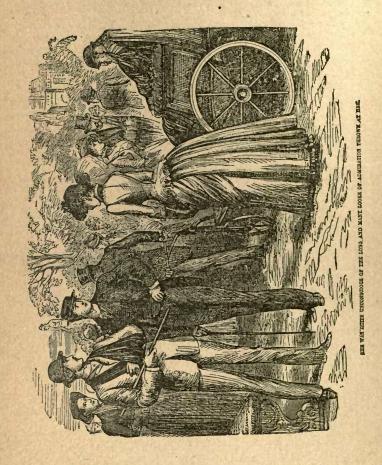
thrown at her; her thoughts were evidently far away.

Sir John Dunworthy drew a long breath.

"She is beautiful!" he said, his eyes lingering on the retreating figure;

"the most beautiful woman I have ever seen!"

"Woman!" cried Basil; "why, she is quite a girl; she must be younger than I am?".



"She need not be very old to arrive at that dignity, certainly. But let us stroll back to the hotel; there may be some letters.

An unspoken thought was in his mind to follow the girl, and feast his

eyes once more on her loveliness.

"There; do you see," murmured Basil, as they sauntered along. "A priest has met them! He is speaking to them—that is the very first person I have seen with them. Hang it all; what a shame! I wish I were going to stay longer. I would find out who she is."

"Just as well for your peace of mind that you are not," returned Sir

John, smiling.

"They are at the Hôtel de l'Europe — I have found out that much," continued Basil, unconsciously pulling himself up to his full height as they approached the slight figure again.

The small group had come to a standstill in the center of the avenue. As Basil had noticed, a priest was with them, bending his tall black-

coated form to speak to the invalid in the chair.

The girl was standing silent, one hand grasping the chair handle, and she let her eyes wander negligently over the crowds of fashionably-attired

people.

She looked up as Sir John Dunworthy and Basil Morne walked slowly past. There was nothing uncommon in their appearance beyond the black silk sling across the light coat; dozens of men of the like stamp were scattered about; and as they disappeared in the moving throng, she turned to answer a question, without another thought to them.

"I am fortunate in finding you," said the priest, softly.

"Yes," returned the girl, listlessly.

"I brought you the books I promised."

"Thank you," she said, quietly, almost coldly; a slight pause, and then she added: "I did not expect to see you here, Father Lawrence."

"No?"

"I thought you were to remain in Bruges for some time," she continued, listlessly, her attention riveted on two small specimens of humanity fighting for a ball."

"I — I had to come to Spa," Father Lawrence said with momentary hesitation.

"Oh, yes," was all she remarked; she was still intent on the infantile struggle.

"What have you been doing?" he asked after awhile.

"Doing? Nothing." "This is a pretty place," waving his hand round; "you ought to find life pleasant and easy here."

"Yes."

The chair was moving on through the crowd; the long-coated figure was pacing by her side.

"I suppose your father will remain for some time?"

"I cannot say," the girl replied, half petulantly; "you know what he is!" She sighed a little as she spoke.

The priest cast a scrutinizing glance at her. "You are looking pale, Miss Messenger."

"It is the heat."

"You are not troubled?" he asked, softly.

The girl turned and met his gaze frankly. "What should trouble me, Father Lawrence?" she said quickly. His answer was lost, for at this moment the servant touched his hand.

" What is it, Sims?" "Shall I turn, miss?" "Ask your master."

The man bent down and whispered his question to the invalid, who nodded vacantly, and the chair was wheeled round slowly in the direction of the town. The priest chatted on suavely on many subjects, but he only received

monosyllabic replies till they reached the archway of the hotel.

"I may come in this evening?" he asked, as Miss Messenger put her small ungloved hand for one moment into his.

"As you please; but you will find it much pleasanter out of doors."

"I thought your father might like some backgammon," he said quietly, replacing the soft felt hat, and ignoring the indifference in her tone; "it sometimes interests him."

"Come, then, certainly," she replied, more gently; and with a slight bow she moved in through the lower old-fashioned door, and mounted the crooked staircase slowly.

Eight years and a half had passed over Ulrica Messenger's head since the night she had been carried in Sam Loudon's arms from the room in the dingy Rue St. Sauveur back to Pauline and her little white cot.

Years of incessant moving about with her hapless father, for George

Messenger was a wreck in mind and body.

Immediately after that terrible interview and struggle with Sir Geoffrey Denvil he fell ill, and became attacked by a species of melancholia which at last settled into softening of the brain.

The Loudons, father and son, took upon themselves the responsibility of the poor invalid, and it was under their kind-hearted guidance that

Ulrica's first five years of comparative orphanage were passed.

At the end of that time George Messenger seemed to recover slightly; that is to say, he recognized well-known faces, and proved that his will was not quite dead by insisting with a strange unaccountable restlessness to be perpetually moved about from place to place; he was never satisfied unless continually changing from one spot to another.

The Loudons would have kept Ulrica under their charge at this time, but with a cunning glimmer of remembrance, her father refused to let her

leave his sight for a day.

The accusation Sir Geoffrey Denvil had suddenly hurled at him rose with terrible prominence in his shattered mind, and he clung to Ulrica with a madman's fear that in some way retribution would overtake him through her. So began a strange life for Ulrica.

There was no love in the child's heart for her father; all the affection

she possessed she lavished on Sam Loudon.

The memory of the night that haunted George Messenger so fearfully had passed from her mind altogether.

Her childhood had held so many and varied scenes that they melted

into a mist of fancies and dreams.

Thus she held no clew to the strange eagerness her father always evinced to keep her at his side, and as his claims upon her duty increased, she unconsciously shrank more and more from him.

Sam Loudon, as self-constituted guardian to Ulrica, had insisted, when she was taken from him, on a governess being procured, and her education

being carefully attended to

Language came easy to the small pupil; the nurses she had had before the governess came had been of the most varied nationality. She could converse fluently in French, leaving her instructress far behind her in Italian, German, and a little Dutch.

She was surrounded by everything that money could give — ill or well gotten, the fruits of George Messenger's life were heaped in abundance.

A very mantle of luxury was spread before her, yet the splendor of her father's wealth could not cover the emptiness and loneliness of her lot.

Sam Loudon had married, and had now a flaxen-haired blossom of his own to cherish, but he never forgot the great gray eyes of his early favorite, and as often as a favorable opportunity occurred, he would join the travelers and spend a day with the beautiful sweet-faced girl he called his ward.

These visits were the one bright spot on Ulrica's dark lonely horizon; she revelled in Sam's genial warmth; she lavished on him all the treasure of her stored love, giving him glimpses of a great, glorious, golden nature that all the narrow limits of her cheerless life could not ruin.

Ulrica let her maid dress her for the solitary dinner with her father in silence. She was always grave - preternaturally so for one so young; but

life held few things other than gloomy for her.

The germ of girlish gaiety lived in her heart, but it was crushed by the sombre gloom of her existence.

The dinner passed wearily, and Ulrica rose almost with a sigh of relief

when the door opened and Father Lawrence was announced.

Ever and anon as he rattled the dice, and listened to the feeble flow of talk from the invalid, the priest would gaze at the graceful figure sitting by the window, and liken her to some saint of old, with her great glorious eyes and pure flower-like face.

At the Hotel Littoral, Basil Morne was busy packing his multitudinous array of presents, Sir John Dunworthy watching the operations while he smoked.

"Now, Jack, remember I leave you my commands. You are to get well as soon as possible, and follow me home."

"All right," said Sir John; "anything more?"
"No, I don't think so. It I want anything brought over, I can write. No—unless you can find out about that girl," suddenly exclaimed Basil; "that I certainly should like you to do, if——"

"I have discovered her name, if that will satisfy you," observed Sir John

quietly.

"You have! Now, Jack," and Basil sat down with a precious vase half packed in his hand; "you have known it and kept me in the dark. What

is it? and how did you find it out? Is she-"

"One question at a time," laughed the other. "I discovered her name through the merest chance. I was sauntering just now through the town, and I saw Molesworth. He is staying at the Hôtel de l'Europe, you know; and he asked me if I had seen the lovely girl every one was talking about. He told me she was at the same place as himself, with her father, who is a great invalid, supposed to be fabulously wealthy; that their name is Messenger - hers Ulrica, and - voilá tout l'

Basil Morne sat silent.

The stopper fell out of the vase he held, but he made no effort to pick it up.

His brow was wrinkled. Suddenly he rose with a tremendous exclamation.

"Eureka!" he shouted. "It is she! Won't he be glad!"

Sir John removed his cigar from his mouth and stared at his companion. "Ulrica Messenger, of course," continued Basil, lost to all but his thoughts. "Rica—little Rica! Why, Uncle Guy has been looking for her for the last ten years, and he has never been able to find a trace of her! Won't he just be glad!"

"This is all exceedingly vague to me," said Sir John.

"Of course it is. What an idiot I am."

And then Basil sat down and told his friend the story of Ulrica—now she had been beaten, rescued, and brought to Wakehurst Hall, and how she had been taken away by her father, and, despite all Dr. Strong's efforts, been lost to view all these years.

"And to find her now she is grown up! It is quite like a novel, isn't it?"

"Hum! I don't know," Sir John observed dryly. "You could not expect to find her a little girl still. In the ten years she would naturally be

grown."

"Nonsense! You know what I mean. She was such a jolly little thing, and I remember Connie Wren was awfully jealous of her, and behaved very unkind to her. She always was selfish!"

"And she retains that quality now," Sir John observed reflectively.

"My eye! Ulrica will make Connie sit up, won't she?" cried Basil.
"I'm glad I'm going home now. Uncle Guy will be so pleased, and — only think, Jack, I kissed her long ago!"

"Get on with your packing, Basil," Sir John said quietly, though with a heightened color, "or you will never make a start to-morrow morning!"

#### CHAPTER III.

LRICA woke early the next morning; it was scarcely five o'clock. She pulled aside her curtains and looked out over the wooded hill that rose at the back of the hotel. The first rosy tinge of sunlight was glinting the trees; above hung a gray soft mist betokening great heat in the coming day.

She stood several minutes by the open window, drinking in the sweetness of the new-born morning, then suddenly determined to go out and breathe it in all its freshness. She dressed rapidly and stole softly down the stairs

to the door.

She walked through the town, past the Casino, till she came to the ave-

nue where the band played.

She sauntered on for some time very leisurely, buried in her thoughts, when she was astonished to hear a deep rumbling sound overhead. She looked up hurriedly; the sky was overeast, thick clouds were spreading over the brilliant blue of but a few moments before. The air had grown closer and hot, and while she glanced round drops of rain pattered down on her clean white gown and pretty broad hat. Secure in this for a shade, she had brought no umbrella, and now she was two miles or more from the hotel, and no shelter visible.

A loud peal of thunder settled her, and gathering her skirts tight round

her, she turned back and sped along fleetly.

Down came the rain; her hat was soon dripping, and her sleeves cling ing to the rounded arms in damp and disagreeable fashion.

The lightning was vivid and terrible. Ulrica was not a nervous girl, but

the grandeur of the storm, the struggle between the elements, overawed her.

She had still a long way to go. The lane, now thick with mud, stretched blankly before her, and she felt very dismal at the sight of it, when at that very moment, from behind, came the welcome sound of a human She stopped, and a man ran up to her side.

" Will you allow me to offer you my umbrella?"

Ulrica hesitated one moment, than a glance at the torrent of rain decided her.

"Thank you very much," she replied; "I will gladly avail myself of a

The stranger took in her soaked condition in one look. "You are terribly wet," he exclaimed; "I am afraid you will catch cold. Please let me urge you to put on this"—hastingly pulling a thick silk handkerchief from an inner pocket, and handing it to her—"round your shoulders. If you will allow me to advise you, I should suggest your placing it across your chest, under that wet dress."

Ulrica took the scarf with a murmur of thanks and a slight blush. man walked beside her while she tucked the warm soft ends through the loose neck of her dress, experiencing at once a decided sense of comfort.

"Thank you very much," she said simply. "It was foolish of me to come out with no sunshade, but the morning was so lovely I was tempted." They walked on quickly through the rivulets of water and falling rain.

Ulrica stole a glance at her rescuer, and as she saw his left arm in a sling, she suddenly remembered noticing him the day before in the avenue.

Shall I hold the umbrella?" Ulrica said hurriedly, with a tinge of color in her face, as she noticed Sir John Dunworthy's crippled arm. "I am afraid you find it difficult, as your other arm is --- "

"Oh, thank you, no. This hand is perfectly sound. I managed to give my left arm a nasty sprain the other day. Besides," he added with a glance at the small white fingers holding the handkerchief close round her throat, "I don't think you would find it easy to hold this heavy concern in such a storm. We have still some way to go. I hope your friends will not be alarmed."

"Oh, no; no one knows of my walk - not even my maid. Poor Mary! she will be greatly distressed; I have quite ruined my dress, the fruits of yesterday's work."

Sir John Dunworthy, glancing now and then at Ulrica, thought he had never seen a more lovely spectacle than the damp maiden by his side.

The rapid walk had brought a glow to the cream-white cheeks, a light to the wonderful eyes. There were no curls to straggle in disheveled locks across her brow, and though the liquid mud was splashed far up the white skirt, it could not hide the trim dainty feet that bore so easily and firmly the supple body above them.

As they approached the railway station, Sir John turned.

"Shall we go in here? It is still early, but I fancy they can get you a cab

if you like, or if we wait a little while, the storm may pass."

"Yes," said Ulrica, who began to feel tired and wretched; "I think I will have a cab. I don't believe if I stop walking I shall be able to begin again."

"How stupid of me! I have been going too fast," he cried, reproachfully. "Please forgive me. I am so accustomed to stride about alone, I quite for-

got your pace would me more moderate."

Ulrica smiled faintly.

"You are not to blame. I had walked a good distance before the storm came on."

They were at the station by this time, and Sir John pushed open the gate

and led her into a sort of general waiting-room.

"It looks like a deserted village," he said, lightly; "now, will you sit here while I go and reconnoitre?"

Ulrica sank shivering into a seat as he disappeared.

She heard his footsteps die away in the distance, and sat on, quietly thinking over his pleasant manners and courteous kindness.

The storm was passing, the clouds breaking, and the thunder growing

fainter and fainter.

In about five minutes Sir John came back.

"We are in luck," he said, as he closed the door. "I have just got hold of a fly that was going into the town; it will be here as soon as possible."

"You are very kind," Ulrica said, warmly.
"What should I——"

"Please don't thank me," he interrupted. "I only did the most ordinary thing, and feel awfully glad I happened to be near. A storm is a lonely proceeding all by one's self. I sincerely hope you will not derive any harm from such a severe shower-bath."

Ulrica smiled.

She liked his frank easy manner more and more; there was something

wonderfully fascinating in his voice.

"I hope," he said, after they had exchanged a few platitudes and remarks on the place - "I hope I may have the pleasure of renewing our acquaintance. Do you stay long in Spa?"

"I don't know; it all depends on my father. If he seems to like the place, it may be weeks - months, before we go; if he takes the whim into his head to dislike it, we may go to-morrow — perhaps even to-night."

There was a touch of weariness in her voice.

"But you?" he could not help saying.

"Oh, I am nobody!" she answered, speaking out the truth without reserve. "I am practically alone; my mother died when I was a little child; my father is quite helpless; he has softening of the brain, with only one strong motive in his feeble mind — the desire to be forever moving about. He does not like me to leave him even for a day."

"It is a hard fate," he said slowly.

Ulrica looked at him suddenly; their eyes met. She read a strange eagerness, almost tenderness, in his gaze, but it lasted only a moment. She woke to the fact that she had been discussing her affairs with an utter stranger.

She rose slowly, and a coldness came in her face.

"I wonder if the cab is ready," was all she said; but he was quick to take the hint.

He went to the door; the vehicle was just entering the yard. The rain had stopped, and already the sun was shining out, golden and hot again.

"Good-bye," said Ulrica gently, as she sat in the cab.

Then putting up her hand, she would have removed the scarf, but he

prevented her.

"Please keep it on," he pleaded. "It will protect you, I hope, from a severe cold. I will do myself the honor to call and inquire if you have escaped that malady to-morrow, Miss Messenger."

"You know my name!" she exclaimed, in surprise.

He laughed easily.

"Spa is, after all, a small place; the inhabitants—or the visitors, for the matter of that — are not devoid of curiosity. Your appearance here was not unnoticed. Once more, good-bye!"

"Au revoir ! smiled Ulrica, and then the cab rolled away from the tall form, with the sunlight gleaming on the uncovered head, picking out the gold in the brown, wavy, short curls, and in the soft, silky mustache, and sending a reflection into the handsome brown eyes that would haunt her memory as she rattled through the wet street.

Her maid was waiting for her in great alarm, and ran to welcome her, beginning at once to unfasten the small shoes, and remove the ruined

gown.

She glanced curiously at the scarf her mistress wore.

Ulrica took it off and folded it up carefully.

"This must be returned to a gentleman when he calls, Mary."

"What name, miss?"

"I don't know; but he will call to inquire for me. I was fortunate enough to meet him in the storm, and he lent me this scarf."

Mary put away the scarf without another word.

The rest of the day passed with leaden feet. Ulrica felt a trifle languid and tired from her morning's exertions.

Towards the close of the afternoon, Father Lawrence was announced. There was no liking or sympathy on the girl's side for this dark-faced

A year ago they had met him in their wanderings, and with a strange, unaccountable fancy, George Messenger seemed suddenly to cling to this

Ulrica at first was quite indifferent; Father Lawrence was a pleasant companion, and seemed to have a soothing influence on the poor, weak invalid.

But, as month succeeded month, she grew less pleased with him...

She could not have told exactly why, but she did not trust him, and secretly resented the authority he seemed to exercise over her actions, notwithstanding it was carefully veiled by a religious garb.

Ulrica looked up indifferently as Father Lawrence entered the room. He advanced towards her, noiselessly. Although over six feet, he always trod gently, and generally accompanied his walk by a movement of his hands, rubbing them softly one over the other.

These appendages were very large, white and thick, and Ulrica had grown to know their very movement as an index to what was passing in the

priest's mind. His face was a blank.

"So you are recovered, Miss Messenger?" he said, as he stood by the graceful figure.

Ulrica lifted her eyes from her book for one moment.

"I have not been ill," she replied, briefly. Father Lawrence pulled a chair up to the window.

"Not ill, but fatigued," he said, gently.

"What should fatigue me?"

The girl indifferently turned over a page.

"You are not accustomed to such early rising, nor such exertion as you indulged in this morning."

Ulrica looked at him very straight.

" How did you know I was out?"

Father Lawrence shrugged his shoulders.

"There are many ways of learning it," he observed smoothly; "but the simplest is to inquire of a lady's-maid for her mistress' health, and gather that she is indisposed from over-fatigue, consequent on an carly walk, and the effects of being caught in a storm."

Ulrica looked dissatisfied at the explanation.

"My father is in his room," was all she said, however, and she bent her head over her book again.

"I know-I have just left him. It is you I wish to speak with, not

your father."

Ulrica leaned back and waited.

"I have a solemn and sacred event to announce to you, began the priest in his most unctuous tones, watching her face carefully. "It has pleased our blessed Lady to lend me her Divine aid in bringing a stray lamb into the fold."

Ulrica was silent while he paused.

"You will scarcely be surprised," he went on softly, "when I tell you

that happy soul is your father."

Ulrica let her book slip to the ground; her face grew very pale, but she uttered no exclamation of surprise or objection; she only looked straight across at the priest, with a fire of contempt in her eyes, and scorn round her mouth.

"Is this the truth?" she asked quietly.

Father Lawrence had risen, his brows met in a frown.

"It is like you to doubt," he answered coldly. "I have spoken the

sacred truth. You object, of course?"

"Object!" the girl said very quietly and sadly; "how can I object? You are stronger than I; what use are my words now? It is too late. To you, no doubt, the conversion of a poor broken will to your faith is a glorious deed; to me, knowing and seeing all, I hold it contemptible!"

The priest's face flushed a little.

"You are unjust as usual," he replied slowly, "but your words do not hurt, they grieve me. My child, in your blindness you judge me unjustly. What have you in your life but principles? and against these principles I bring the weapon of a Holy Church, offering sanctity, absolution to the poor weak sinner, blessing with a glorious graciousness all her children, however deep they may be steeped in sin, even — even as your father may be."

Ulrica glanced up and read a strange expression in his eye.

"What do you mean?" she murmured quickly, a sudden and great

dread filling her heart.

"All men are sinners, I meant nothing more than that. I sought you now," he said, after a moment's pause, "to tell you of your father's conversion, and to acquaint you with the fact that in two day's time I shall receive him into the Church by the rite of holy baptism. You will be present?"

"No," answered the girl quietly, her voice very low and sad; "to me it

will be a mockery - I will not witness it."

The door was closed, and Ulrica was alone; she sat on very still for many minutes deep in thought.

# CHAPTER IV.

CIR JOHN DUNWORTHY called the following morning and received his scarf from Mary with a message of thanks. He walked away feeling disappointed that Ulrica had not given him an interview, but in a few minutes he told himself he was a fool to expect any such thing; she could hardly receive a young man who but for an accident was a perfect stranger to her.

He felt a trifle lonely. Basil Morne had departed early on the previous

day, and he missed the merry rattle of the boy's talk.

There were many people he knew by sight, but few intimate friends, yet he lingered day after day in Spa, and only to catch a glimpse of that graceful form walking beside her father's chair.

The tall black-coated figure of the priest was always with her, but Sir John, watching carefully, noticed that Ulrica never spoke to him, and that

all his observations were directed to the invalid.

The young man cast about in his mind for some way of renewing his speaking acquaintance with Ulrica, but could find none; until she made the first advance he could do nothing but wait.

Mary has fallen a victim to Sir John's brown eyes and persuasive charm of manner, and had carried his card up to Ulrica with tremendous import-

"It's your fate, Miss Ulrica," she said, nodding her head wisely.

The tiniest shade of warmth had dawned on Ulrica's cheek like the deepest glow of a blush rose, but she had only smiled.

"Sir John Dunworthy, and what a nice gentleman he is, too. He were

quite disappointed at not seeing you!"

"Put the card in my dressing-case, Mary," Ulrica had answered with just a faint sigh.

George Messenger had been baptized into the Roman Church two days after her interview with Father Lawrence, and Ulrica, now that all was

over, felt strangely sad at the event.

It snapped, as it were, the last tie that bound her to any one, for, lonely as her life had always been, her father had made incessant claims on her duty, and now she found herself pushed gently and firmly aside by the priest, who bore with the invalid's peevishness and innumerable wants with the patience and tenderness of a woman, and by the aid of his religious position ruled the broken spirit with the greatest ease.

The days passed in dreary succession. People had grown used to the sight of the beautiful girl and her invalid father and had left off speculating

about them.

Ulrica liked Spa. If only Father Lawrence had not been present, she would have been passively happy, but his continual companionship was a trial to her, his unctuous voice vexed and irritated her, and his hold over her father filled her with alarm for her own future.

They were walking one afternoon, as usual, towards the avenue, when a small carriage, drawn by two ponies, was pulled up close to the pave-

ment, and the priest hurried to the side with a low bow.

Ulrica and her father passed on. The girl gave only one glance at the oocupants of the carriage.

A small fair-haired woman, gleaming with bugles and crème de l'impéra.

trice, and seated beside her a dark keen-eved man.

The chair was drawn slowly down the avenue. Ulrica was not long in finding Sir John's form among the loiterers, and, unconsciously, she gave him a warmer smile than usual.

Her father was always placed in one particular spot, advantageously chosen for the sake of the music; and the servant drew up as usual, while

Ulrica sent him for one of the loose chairs to sit beside her father.

She was standing watching the yellow sunlight glint the trees, and fall in feathery lace patterns on the broad path, when she was startled by hearing a curious gasping sound come from the bath-chair. She turned quickly. George Messenger had half risen, his face was distorted, his eyes glaring, his hands working convulsively, while a gray shade was creeping slowly over the sunken cheeks.

"What is it? What shall we do, Sims?" she whispered.

"It is a fit, Miss Ulrica," the man returned hurriedly. "I had better

fetch a doctor."

"Can I help you?" came a welcome voice at this moment; and, looking up with a white face and trembling lips, Ulrica saw Sir John Dunworthy.

"Oh, thank you. My father is ill. What shall I do? I have never

seen him like this before."

"Unfasten his necktie," exclaimed Sir John, assisting with his one hand. "He must have air. Stand back!" he cried to the crowd that, of course, assembled round, gaping and unceremonious, making the hot atmosphere still more dense.

She sent a hurried glance ever the sea of faces.

Curiosity, and, in some cases, pity, were marked on them, but there was

nothing alarming in their gaze.

Sir John watched her color fade slowly, till the very features seemed

"I feel certain he is frightened of some one or some thing," she murmured, in reply to the young man's anxious, inquiring look. Oh, when will Sims come, and why will people stare so terribly?"

At this moment an official was seen bustling in the distance, but before he could reach the crowd it was parted by a strong arm; a tall form pushed

unceremoniously through, and bent over the sick man.

"I am a doctor," said the new comer authoritatively, after taking a brief glance at his patient; "stand back, do you hear? Merciful Heavens! do you want to kill the man altogether?"

Ulrica's hand was still held between her father's clutching, working fingers, but her other grasped the chair-side for support. Sir John longed to draw her from the sight, but he dared not touch her; she seemed glued to the spot with fear.

At the words, "I am a doctor," she uttered a faint exclamation of relief and gladness, and in the momentary relaxation from her alarm, did not

hear Sir John's cry of surprise and joy.

"Strong - thank Heaven!"

Dr. Strong took no notice of either; he detached the girl's small, white hand from her father's weird, yellow one, and calling the official, lifted the contracted form from the chair, and carried it to a bench beneath some

Sir John, left alone with Ulrica — for the people flocked after the doctor -forgot all ceremony in his anxiety for her, and, pushing her gently into a seat, he fanned her with her broad-brimmed hat, and then held a glass

of water, which some kind Samaritan had brought, to her lips.

She repaid him with one look out of her glorious eyes which made his heart beat with a quick strange throb, and sent the blood coursing hotly through his viens.

If she had seemed beautiful to him that early morning in her fair fresh youthfulness and vigor, she appeared doubly to him now as she leaned back white and silent, with an expression of wishfulness round her mouth that was almost pain.

He did not offer to speak, but waved the hat to and fro with his right hand, content in the thought that he was near her, and was able to help

her once again.

In a few minutes Dr. Strong strode over to them.

"Your father is very ill," he said abruptly, yet gently; "he must be taken to his room at once; will you tell me where it is?"

"I will come with you," said Ulrica, rising hurriedly. "Sims, his man, is just coming; he will help you. Hôtel de l'Europe. What can I do?"

"You will stay here, please," commanded the doctor promptly. "Dunworth, please see that my orders are obeyed. I will send for you in a few

"You are very kind," murmured the girl, sinking into her chair faintly. She was unconsciously relieved not to be wanted. Her strength had been greatly tried.

"May I stay with you?" asked Sir John as they were alone again.

"If you will," she answered simply.

The stricken man was lifted onto a litter and carried slowly away, attended by the entire circle of promenaders. The avenue suddenly seemed deserted, the band had ceased playing, the only music now was the rustle of the trees and the birds' notes to one another.

"You are better?" asked the young man gently, as the crowd vanished.

She drew a long breath.
"Better? Yes; but how terrible! Am I always to live in trouble?" She clasped her hands together and gazed moodily over the sunlit path with eyes that were black with anxiety. "What, can have caused it?" she murmured; "what can have caused it?"

"The heart, perhaps," suggested Sir John. "Your father, I take it, is far from strong, and the summer has been tremendous enough to knock over any one but a Red Indian. He will be all right, you will see; at all

events he cannot be in better hands than Strong's."
"You know this doctor?" Ulrica asked with some surprise.

"Yery well; he is a near neighbor of my own in England." He thought to himself that he knew, too, what had brought Guy Strong to Spa, but he refrained from speaking of the past for fear of paining her. "Is there anything I can do?" he continued. "Any telegram I can send? Please make use of me."

"No," said Ulrica quietly and sadly; "we have no friends but one, and he is away with his wife; I don't know exactly where to find him;" she alluded to Sam Loudon. "But my father will get better—he must get better!" she cried suddenly and nervously; she was brought face to face with a dilemma she had never even dreamed of. What was to become of her when her father was gone?

Sir John Dunworthy soothed her tenderly; he spoke of Dr. Strong's

talent, cheered her by his bright manliness, and wove the first link in the bond of a true friendship by his gentle courtesy and kindness.

"You are fated to help me," said Ulrica, by-and-by, a faint smile dawning on her cheek. "I cannot tell you how much I appreciate your great

kindness; I have had so little."

"There is no greater happiness for me in this world than to be your friend," Sir John answered hurriedly, scarce knowing what he said as he met the gaze of her wondrous eyes. "Don't think me presumptuous; I have watched you so much lately, I seem to know you well."

The girl looked at him quietly for a moment; there was a new strange

sensation creeping into her heart.
"My friend!" she said slowly. "Ah, you don't know what that means to me - you cannot understand how much the word seems to say. Yes," stretching out her hand - "yes, be my friend, if you will."

He bent his head and touched her hand with his lips. Ulrica rose

quickly with a flush on her face.

"There is the doctor," she murmured hurriedly. "He will -- I must go."

Guy Strong advanced towards them with gigantic strides.

"Your father is on his bed," he said abruptly. "You may come now."
"How can I thank you! There is no great danger, is there?"

"There is no immediate danger." Guy clasped her hand. must not get nervous or anxious, or I shall have two patients instead of one."

Ulrica tried to smile, but her lips were tremulous.

"Do you know," continued Guy, "that I am an old, old friend? I carried you in my arms when you were a wee thing. You don't remember

Ulrica raised her eyes to the plam kind face, and after a moment's scru-

tiny, shook her head.

"Don't you remember Basil, and Uncle Guy?"

Ulrica let her eyes wander away over the scene, while she cast her thoughts back into the strange troubled mist of her childhood; and he

watched her earnestly.

"Uncle Guy!" she repeated, blankly; "Uncle Guy! Strange, the name seems familiar — Uncle Guy and — Basil. Yes; and "— her face suddenly cleared—" and the pretty lady. Yes, yes; I remember now—you were good to me when I was a poor little thing at Mrs. Coxon's. How could I have forgotten? And you - you carried me in your arms that cold night. I can remember it all so well now. You are Uncle Guy!"

She put out her hands eagerly to Dr. Strong.

"Yes, I am Uncle Guy," he said, gently, "and I have come all this way to see you. I have never forgotten your sweet little face; I knew you again directly."

#### CHAPTER V.

LRICA walked back to the hotel in a state of bewilderment and agitation. agitation.

Dr. Strong spoke little to the girl; he saw how overwrought was her mind, and knew that silence and quiet were the best prescription. Sir John had left them to return to his rooms, but he begged permission to call in the evening.

Sims met them at the hotel door.

At sight of his face, all Ulrica's dread returned.

"How is he, Sims?" she asked, hurriedly. "Is he petter?"

"Father Lawrence is with him, miss," answered the man; "but I think, sir, you ought to go to him."

"Oh, go at once!" murmured the girl, slipping her hand from his arm

and growing pale again. "Shall I come, too?"

"Yes," was the brief reply. As they mounted the stairs, he added:
"Who is this priest? If I recollect rightly, your father used to be a
Roman Catholic?"

"He was not until a week ago. Father Lawrence is a man we met some

time past; he has converted my father."

Ulrica could not prevent a sadness creeping into her tones. "He has great influence over him," she added slowly.

The best and the first landing on the

They had reached the first landing as she spoke, and she turned impul-

sively and put out her hands.

"I—I am so glad you are come!" she said hurriedly; "somehow I seem to know you so well, to feel almost as though I were a little girl and you were helping me again. I may call you Uncle Guy, may I not?" He clasped her hands in his.

"Yes, dear, always," he answered, and then he sighed. Ulrica turned the handle of her father's door gently.

He was lying stretched on the bed still in his outdoor clothes.

Bending over him murmuring softly was the dark face of the priest. He turned as the girl approached.

"He tries to speak, but can make no sound," he said quietly. Guy Strong moved forward and put his hand on the limp wrist.

"You have excited him," he said tersely. "I left orders no one was to

be admitted till I returned."

"I am his spiritual physician," returned Father Lawrence, rearing his form to its full height; "at such a moment it is my duty to be at his side."

Ulrica had crept into a chair close to the bed; she was watching Dr.

Strong's face anxiously.

There was but a feeble throb in the pulse, and Guy hastily poured out

a draught and tried to force it between his pallid lips.

At the touch of the firm arm beneath his head, George Messenger's eyes opened. They wandered slowly round the room as if in search of something.

The priest, whose placid face wore almost a frown, bent forward and began to whisper, but the glazed eyes went past his eager countenance still,

as if they sought an object.

There was a weak effort to lift the nerveless hands, but it was useless. "He wants something," said Guy as he watched his patient carefully.

Father Lawrence bent over the sick man and once more murmured softly, but with no avail.

The gray sunken face twitched, and the lips trembled as if a torrent of words would pour from them, yet they could not part to utter one.

Guy put his hand on the shrunken body; there was a wild exciting beating at the heart one moment, almost absolute stillness the next.

"Shall I bring Sims—he may do some good?" whispered Ulrica, her breath coming quick and fast.

An indescribable fear had fallen on her.

She did not love her father, but it was horrible to see him lie so helpless and give no aid.

Dr. Strong nodded his head; the end, he saw, was near at hand; he was only too glad to get Ulrica from the room.

She rose quietly and moved softly to the door, but before she reached it,

her father's eye fell on her.

With an effort that was almost superhuman, he sat up, his face convulsed, his hands working, hoarse gutteral sounds coming from between his pallid lips.

"He wants you - perhaps you can soothe him," cried Guy, putting his

arms round the writhing form.

Ulrica was by the bedside again in an instant. Her father fought for his breath, struggled to speak, but all words died in the confused gasping.

She shrank with horror from the sight of that awful distorted face, and would have fallen had not the priest put his arm round her and drawn her

to a chair at the window.

Her senses faded for one long moment. The room with its ghastly occupant died away in a dim, curious fashion, and the next she was lying back in a chair and Gny Strong was bending over her.

"Don't speak," he said quickly, as he saw her lips tremble.

She gave one glimpse at the bed.

Something was on it; a sheet drawn, hid, yet disclosed, what lay be-With a sudden cold shudder she realized the truth. Her father was dead!

She covered her face with her hands.

"Take me away," she murmured faintly; "take me away!"

Guy half lifted her from the chair and hurriedly supported her across the room to the landing.

Her maid was here, hovering about in case of emergency, and together

they assisted her to her room.

Guy put her on a couch drawn close to the open window, with the soft, sweet sunshine and air streaming in, and after promising a sleepingdraught, and giving strict orders to Mary to administer it, took his departure.

Outside he met Father Lawrence. The priest was walking slowly up

and down the passage.

"How is she?" he asked abruptly.

"Ill with the shock. I shall keep her in her own room if possible until after the funeral, which must be hastened on. I am just going to interview the valet, to get at some idea of the state of things. Can you give me any reason for this sudden seizure?"

Father Lawrence shook his head.

"None whatever. The poor creature was unable to speak; he seemed to have been much mentally excited; but despite all my endeavors I could obtain no clew, and he passed away without the last sacred rite of the Church, to my sorrow."

"Hum!" observed Guy quietly. "Miss Messenger has told me of her father's conversion. Religious excitement is always the most dangerous;

he must have been in very delicate health of late."

"An additional reason for administering spiritual sustenance," retorted

the priest smoothly.

Dr. Strong made no answer to this; he was not eager to prolong the conversation, so, with a bow, passed on into the dead man's room.

Guy left the man and went out to dispatch a telegram to Paris to Sam

Loudon, in the hope that it would find him.

The afternoon sun was growing red; everybody was flocking to the Promenade des Sept-heures, and, after his visit to the post-office, Dr. Strong turned and sauntered along, his thoughts going far ahead of his steps.

What was to become of Ulrica? Alone, without a relative even of the most remote kind to whom she could apply, what could she do?

It was a serious, an awkward position for a young girl; one, too, who possessed such peculiarly great personal charms as she did.

In his musings he wandered past the Britannique. Sir John Dunworthy

was standing at the entrance smoking. "Well, what news?" he asked eagerly.

"The worst," Dr. Strong replied.

"Dead?" Guy nodded.

"Good heavens! how awful for that poor thing!" exclaimed Sir John.

" What is she to do, Strong?"

"That is just what I have been debating. I really don't know. I have this instant dispatched a telegram to a Mr. Loudon, who the servant tells me is a sort of guardian; but it may be some time before he receives it, as he is supposed to be away from Paris."

"But what is she to do? No friends except this one man in Paris! - no

relations! Strong, we must help her."

Guy threw a sharp, hurried glance at the other's handsome face.

"It is a difficult question. If Loudon turns up, things will be all right, but if he does not, I don't quite know what to do."

"Cannot she return to England with us? Your mother or mine would

welcome her most warmly."

"I am not so sure about the latter," thought Guy. Aloud he said:

"Yes; I have thought of that, of course. It was for the very purpose of seeking Ulrica out and carrying her home with me that I left Balhurst; but still it is this immediate present that seems difficult to arrange. Her father's will must settle everything. It appears to me we can do nothing till that is read; and that cannot be done until Loudon arrives. Anyway, I am more than glad I am here to offer all the help I can."

They sauntered on till they reached the hotel, and then parted.

The funeral took place two days following. Sam Loudon never came;

no message even arrived; it was evident he was still away.

Ulrica sat in her bedroom through those long dreary two days, listless and wretched. She felt no sorrow at her father's death-love for him had never lived in her heart; therefore there was no grief.

Ulrica felt rather oppressed and stunned by her position. She realized, for the first time, the utter loneliness of her life. She knew of no one beyond Sam Loudon to whom she could stretch out her hands for sympathy, or ask for advice.

Guy was as yet strange to her; and though she thought of him warmly, and of Sir John with a slight flush on her face, yet the question of either

of them being actual friends and advisers did not come to her.

She remembered Father Lawrence with a shudder of dislike, and mentally determined to have, if possible, no further communication with him. She had only Sam to fall back on; she longed for him wistfully; he had

never failed. He would come now and take care of her for a while, till she could think over the future and arrange her life.

So she sat and thought during the long hours, while her kind-hearted Mary was driven to despair at sight of her white troubled face. And outside the rain fell in depressing and steady fashion, adding considerably to the gloom of the situation.

Ulrica gazed from her window listlessly at the wet road; the fine weather had suddenly broken, and Spa was deluged in a most unusual

fashion.

Once or twice the sight of a tall figure in a loose English ulster striding towards the hotel brought the color to her cheeks, but otherwise she sat on quietly watching the few pedestrians as in a dream.

Guy Strong made no effort to see her until the funeral was over; he questioned Mary frequently about her, and remained as long as he could at the hotel in order to receive the telegram from Sam directly it arrived.

In the evening of the day he returned to the hotel, and mounting the stairs, knocked at Ulrica's door. Simultaneously with his doing so, Mary appeared in the corridor. Ulrica answered his summons, and put her hand into his without a word.

"May I come in and talk to you?" he asked.

Ulrica was about to reply, when Mary interposed.
"Oh, I beg your pardon, Miss Ulrica, and you, sir, but Father Lawrence sent to ask if you would kindly go into the lower sitting-room. He has something he wants to tell you."

Ulrica's lips compressed a little; involuntarily she glanced at Guy.

"Perhaps it would be as well to hear what his communication is; it may be of some importance."

"Tell Father Lawrence I will come," Ulrica said to Mary; then as the

maid disappeared, she added to Guy:

"Thank you for your kindness; you are very good. It is pleasant to know you are here; the sense of utter loneliness is appalling. I am distressed about Sam's silence. Why does he not send or come? It is so unlike him."

"You must not fret," Guy answered, soothingly; his ear detected the nervous ring in her voice. Something must have detained him. Have you

any idea what, or rather, who was your father's lawyer?"

Ulrica shook her head.

"Sam managed all the business; but we had better go down, I suppose.

What can Father Lawrence have to tell me, I wonder?"

"Perhaps your father left some religious commissions in his hands, which he must inform you of; at any rate, it is better to hear him."

He turned the handle of the sitting-room door as he spoke, and they

passed in.

Father Lawrence was bending over the table, conversing in a low voice with a small, thin man. As they entered, he drew himself up and bowed to Ulrica, who returned the greeting coldly.

The priest glanced at Guy with an imperceptible frown.

"Pardon me," he said, suavely, "but my communication is private." Ulrica hesitated only for an instant, then putting out her hand to Guy, said slowly:

"Dr. Strong is my friend - please go on."

Guy clasped her hand with a grip that was almost pain, but she did not notice it.

"As you please; of course it is a matter of indifference to me. I have to communicate to you your father's last wishes."

Father Lawrence pushed forward a chair as he spoke.

Ulrica did not take it, but stood upright, her black dress falling in simple folds round her supple figure.

"I don't quite understand you," she answered, coldly.
"I allude to the final arrangements of his property."

"Then I think it will be wiser to wait till Mr. Loudon arrives; he was my father's friend, and managed his affairs."

"Besides, it is customary to wait until after the will is read," observed

Guy.

"I have the last will and testament of the late Mr. Messenger here," broke in the small man sitting at the table.

"You?"

A wave of color passed over Ulrica's face.

"When was it made?" demanded Guy hurriedly.

"On the fifteenth of August."

" Just one week ago!"

"Just one week ago," repeated the man. "I am a lawyer; I drew it up."
Both Guy and Ulrica were silent; a suspicion of the truth was in his
mind; a knowledge that in some way the priest had triumphed was in
hers.

"You had better read the will," said Father Lawrence softly, "with Miss Messenger's permission."

Ulrica lifted her eyes to his.

"Yes, read it," she said very quietly.

The lawyer coughed, rose from his chair, and began to intone rather

than to read from the parchment he held.

Ever and again as the sentences ceased, Father Lawrence looked at the girl; there was no sign of disturbance or alarm on her face; her attitude never altered; she kept her hands quietly folded the whole time.

"It is iniquitous!" exclaimed Guy, as the lawyer began to fold up the

document.

"You use strong words, sir," remarked the priest, with knit brows.

"Have you no reverence for the dead?"

"This is not the work of the dead; it is the scheming of the living. I thought a priest's office was to administer spiritual comfort, not to work rank injustice."

"You do not know Father Lawrence."

The words were uttered in clear distinct tones. Ulrica moved a few steps forwards and placed one hand on a chair; her face was very pale, but her eyes blazed with the contempt that was surging in her breast.

"I do; we understand one another. Father Lawrence, you have worked well; by the terms of this will, if within six months I do not enter the Church of Rome, you inherit every penny of my father's money. You know very little of my character if you imagine such an alternative would influence me; it is well to bring all communication between us to an end now; once and for all, therefore, here in the presence of witnesses, I declare I shall never enter the Church of Rome, and that I accept the wishes of my father as final."

"You have still six months for reflection; by then, perhaps, you will have changed your mind," the priest remarked sharply.

"I shall never change my mind on this point,"

Guy, watching her face, saw the lips compress again, and then a wave of emotion pass over them.

"If everything else urged me," she said swiftly, "the knowledge of what your religion means would be a sufficient barrier to my conversion."

She bowed and turned away. Guy stepped forward, drew her hand, and

led her from the room.

They mounted the stairs in silence till they reached the door; then Guy spoke.

"There must be something wrong about this disgraceful business," he

said hurriedly; "will you give me permission to investigate it?"

"What can you do?" returned Ulrica in a low voice. "I am pôwerless. If Sam were only here!" She passed her hand wearily over her eyes.

"I will go at once and send another wire, but first I want you to prom-

ise something."

"What is it?"

"That you will look upon me as Sam for the time, and that you will let

me take you away to my mother in England."

Ulrica hesitated only for one instant; a rush of comfort came with his last words.

"I promise," she answered quietly.

"Thank you."

Guy bent and kissed her hands; then, as the door closed upon her, he ran down hastily to the other room.

"The legality of this will must be tested," he said coldly as he entered.

"Show Dr. Strong the document," was the priest's reply.

The will was drawn out in proper form and signed by two witnesses. "The one is a waiter here," observed the lawyer, "the other a trades-

"The one is a waiter here," observed the lawyer, "the other a tradesman in the town, who will answer any questions Dr. Strong may choose to make."

Guy put the will down quietly.

"You forgot one thing," he said to Father Lawrence: "the state of Mr. Messenger's mind when this will was made."

For answer the priest took out a capacious pocket-book, and, extracting

a paper, handed it to Guy.

"The medical certificate of Mr. Messenger's physician during the last year, stating that the dead man's mental faculties were unimpaired at the time he signed that will."

Guy glanced at the signature; it was well known to him.

"You are a subtle strategist, Father Lawrence," he observed dryly, "at every point well armed. I sincerely trust you will not find this money bring you evil results."

Against himself the priest started, and changed color a little; he did not

reply, however, but returned the letter to his note-case.

"Miss Messenger has decided to start for England to-night," continued Guy after a slight pause; "she will stay with my mother. As she has given you her decision, from which I am assured she will never move, may I beg that you will in no way seek to approach her? Sach a course can be productive of nothing but pain and annoyance to her."

"Until the six month's have expired, I cannot accept Miss Messenger's decision of to-day as final," returned Father Lawrence; "the wishes of the dead are sacred to me; therefore, I must refuse to agree to your

request."

"'Forewarned is forearmed,'" was Guy's reply, and too angry to say

more, he left the room.

A telegram was handed to him as he stood in the passage. He tore it open; it was from Mrs. Loudon, dated San Remo.

"My husband is very ill; cannot possibly travel. Please let us know

Ulrica's movements."

This news settled him; they would start immediately for London, and his mother.

He determined not to tell Ulrica of Sam's illness until they arrived in

England, knowing that the fact would grieve and alarm her.

He sent for Mary, gave her instructions to have everything ready as quickly as possible, then hurried back to the Britannique to inform Sir John Dunworthy of their hasty departure.

# CHAPTER VI.

MHE journey to England was soon at an end. Ulrica was carried fleetly away from London, with its smoke and roar, down through fresh green fields and groups of trees, to the country; thence, after a hearty au revoir from Sir John, she was bowled in a handsome carriage up to Bathurst Hall, the property of Guy Strong.
"Welcome home!" Guy said tenderly, as he helped her to alight.

Her emotion was quickly dispelled, for Basil Morne came on the scene, followed by a girl—such a happy, good-tempered, ugly girl, with a mass of red hair and dancing green-gray eyes.

Dr. Strong found himself enveloped in this young maiden's embrace. "Dear Uncle Guy, how lovely! We didn't expect you till any time." Guy laughed.

"Didn't you, Chattie! Now, to make friends with your new cousin. Ulrica, this is Chattie Wren, the dearest tomboy in the whole world."

Ulrica's face was hidden beneath her crape veil, but Chattie put up her

lips nevertheless for a kiss.

Basil had already made himself known, and Guy led the young stranger

"Here is my mother, Ulrica," he said, as they met a sweet-faced, white-haired lady just inside. "You must learn to love her." "That will be easy," whispered the girl almost tearfully.

"Where is Connie?" demanded Dr. Strong.
"Where do you think?" laughed Chattie. "Up-stairs, having a pleasant afternoon with Iones. There is a ball at the Goodwins to-night, and she is going."

"Oh, ah, of course; I forgot. Well, Ulrica, I dare say you would like

to go your room?"

"Yes; I will show her the way," cried Chattie, dancing up-stairs. "You are to have the Robin Room, next door to mine."

Ulrica felt her spirits rise from the very instant she entered this peaceful

home.

Little did she dream, as she glanced at her smiling reflection, that a day would come when the sunshine of this hour would be torn from her, and this very room witness her battling with a sorrow that almost killed her.

No such visions troubled her; she was serene in her new happiness, and when a tap came to the door, she uttered "Come in!" in such light joyous tones, that sounded strange even to her own ears.

It was Guy's mother who entered, and bent to give the lovely face a kiss. "I have come to take you down to dinner, dear. Guy thought you might feel lonely," Mrs. Strong said kindly, smiling affectionately at the girl.

"How good you are! Thank you so much!"

"I am afraid I must ask you to walk slowly. I am not quite as agile as I was."

Ulrica, for answer, drew the thin white hand through her arm, and the two paced quietly down the stairs conversing naturally.

Chattie, in a nondescript garment of green muslin, was assisting as an

onlooker.

It was not Miss Wren's usual custom to dress for a ball until after dinner, but she had determined to make her first appearance before this muchtalked-of stranger en grande toilette.

"Put that diamond butterfly to the left, Jones," said Connie, turning her dainty head round. "Yes-there. Now, Chattie, how do you like

it?"

"Hum!" Chattie observed critically. "Looks like a French fashionplate;" then seeing her sister frown, she added: "But it's very nice; and it won't dance down."

Then there was a silence while the skirt was lifted with care, and much

rustling, over the elaborate coiled tresses.

"She wears no fringe," said Chattie, as this was successfully accomplished.

"How bourgeoise!" exclaimed Connie. "Is she really good-looking?" Good-looking? Why, Connie, she's lovely!"

"Your ducks are always swans," was Miss Wren's retort.

"Well, you'll see her at dinner, and you can then judge for yourself." Chattie walked to the door, stopped before the long mirror to indulge in a fantastic dance.

"Hum!" mused Connie, as the bodice was laced to her rounded figure. "Sets up for a beauty, does she? I am glad Amina sent this dress in time."

"There goes the gong, Connie!" shrieked Chattie; "make haste! It will be a perfect farce, her sitting through dinner," was her muttered thought, "for I don't believe she can swallow a single mouthful!"

The whole party were assembled, and half-way through the first course. when Miss Wren, with much rustle and a scattered air of perfume, sailed in.

In answer to Guy's introduction, she dropped a curtsy to Ulrica, who had risen and held out her hand, and then she arranged herself on the edge of a chair, sitting bolt upright, and creaking painfully whenever she moved: but her waist was the size of a tumbler, consequently she was happy.

Ulrica had withdrawn her hand shyly, and felt at first a little uncomfortable, but the rest of the party were so kind and genial, this feeling soon

wore off.

Ulrica gazed at Connie in admiration and amazement; she was so pretty. her hair was so golden, her skin so white, her cheeks so pink, she seemed perfectly lovely to the generous mind of the new comer.

Connie, on the other hand, was mortified beyond measure at the indisputable beauty opposite; there was, too, an air and style about this girl

that was most agreeable to contemplate.

"And her gown is cut splendidly too!" was her vexed reflection; "she has one of the new skirts. I must tell Jones; it will certainly not do to be behind her."

And there was a frown on the pretty face till Guy, in the midst of a conversation with Ulrica, looked round suddenly.

"Connie, I quite forgot; there is a white bouquet arrived for you from London—a present from Dunworthy. He desired me to ask you to keep him some dances."

A week passed—a happy, delightful week to Ulrica.

Each day brought Sir John Dunworthy to Bathurst Hall, and somehow

the height of enjoyment vanished when he was not present.

After lunch, the four young people went into the grounds, and Connie adroitly claimed Sir John's arm, pleading a little lameness, which was not unfounded, for her shoes, though pretty, were distinctly small.

Ulrica saw nothing of her plotting; she was so happy, so radiantly con-

tent in her new life. All Connie's spiteful remarks fell unheeded.

Between Chattie and her sister there was very little love; the former was the devoted slave of Ulrica, who, in return, had grown to love the

impetuous little maiden heartily.

Ulrica and Chattie ran ahead, and seated themselves on a clump of mosscovered trees, while Sir John was compelled, much against his will, to pilot Connie slowly towards them.

They chatted on general subjects for a little while, and then Connie said:

"Does Mr. Mott return to-night?"

Sir John was gazing earnestly at Ulrica's lovely face. "I suppose so," he answered indifferently.

Connie frowned as she saw the direction of his eyes.

"Is there not something queer about his past?" she went on, determined to claim all Sir John's attention.

He roused himself.

"Yes; I believe he has, or rather had, a history; but who has not? I confess I don't particularly care for Mott, but he is wonderfully popular, especially with women."

"I wonder he does not marry," continued Connie.

Ulrica gave a slight shudder.

"I cannot bear him," she said involuntarily. "Poor Mr. Mott!" observed Connie dryly.

"Now, I can't make up my mind," said Chattie, knitting her brows.

"Have you got one, Charlotte?" asked Sir John lazily, turning the conversation.

"I will give you a piece of it, if you like, Johnny Jack," was the retort. "Ulrica, wake up - you are going to sleep! You have not seen anything yet. Come as far as the old well."

Ulrica rose at once, and Sir John jumped to his feet.

"I must do the honors, Chattie," he said quickly. "Will you come,

Miss Wren?"

Connie hesitated; the thought of Ulrica going off, even for a few minutes, with Sir John, was gall and wormwood, but a glance at her feet decided her. She knew the path too well, it was rough walking all the way, and every movement meant acute pain; besides, Chattie made a third.

"No, I will stay here," she said sweetly, and a little plaintively; "don't

be long."

" All right!" cried Chattie.

Sir John and Ulrica were already moving on, and the fair martyr to fashion was left to solitude and to her own devices.

"It would have been an awful fraud to pretend to come out and admire the scenery and never move from one spot," cried Chattie as they made their way down a rough incline. "Now, Jonathan Jack, please remember you are showman."

"Thanks for reminding me of my duties," said Sir John, whose spirits

seemed to rise buoyantly at every step.

It was gradually dawning on him that he only experienced true happiness when in the presence of this girl with the soft creamy skin and wondrous violet eyes.

He had not tried to gauge the depths of his feelings for her, content to live in the golden, unconsciously beautiful dream that seemed to linger

round her.

"This, then, Miss Messenger," he began gaily - "this well to which we are taking you, is one of the ancient remains on my estate. This path we are traveling now is said to have been worn by the feet of the monks who fetched and carried the water. Part of the castle is supposed to have been a monastery. I incline to the thought that some one of my ancestors built a chapel for his own private use, but this is quite an objectionable theory to my mother, who would rather think of our home as bestowed on some warrior for reward and booty, than imagine one of them a papist.

"What does it matter so long as you have the castle?" said Chattie,

turning to look back.

"I don't think it does much," replied Sir John. "Miss Messenger, this

's awfully rough; let me help you.'

"No, thank you," Ulrica answered, feeling her color rise and her heart thrill strangely; "I am quite safe."

"Only a few steps more," called Chattie, lightly skipping down and dis-

appearing in a bend in the path.
"You must let me help you," Sir John said almost peremptorily, putting out his hand. Ulrica slipped her little one into it, and at the contact her heart thrilled

The young man said nothing more, but he clasped the hand in a firm

way, and guided her feet on to secure places.

A few more steps were taken, and then they came upon Chattie seated on the broad stonework that surrounded the old well, stooping down to gaze into its depths.

"Take care, Chattie dear!" cried Ulrica, drawing her hand from Sir John's and moving forward hurriedly; " we don't want to lose you just

vet !"

"Oh, I'm all right! Look down, Ulrica—isn't it deep?"

Ulrica bent over.

Down at the very bottom she caught the glimmer of the blue sky reflected in the silent water.

"Draw us some, Jonathan?" commanded Chattie lazily. "What good

are you if you don't do something for your living -eh Ulrica?"

Sir John loosened the old bucket with its rusty rattling chain, and they watched it sink lower and lower till only a faint splash told them it had reached its goal; than Chattie would help to wind it up, and Ulrica, not to be outdone, put her hand on the rail and pulled too.

Somehow it looked a pretty sight to the young man, those delicate

fingers next to his own brown strong ones.

"Look out!" shrieked Chattie, as the bucket with its cool sparkling

burden reached the top; "mind yourselves!" and she swung the whole concern on to the ledge. "Now, put down your lips, and drink, pretty

creature, drink! Cups are scarce in this neighborhood."

Ulrica took off her broad-brimmed hat and bent her head to the water, with a blush and a laugh, Sir John feasting his eyes the while on her marvelous beauty. The sun shone on her uncovered hair, glinting its golden threads and deep russet-brown shadings with its warm touch.

"I like brown hair much better than yellow, don't you, Johnnie Jack?"

queried Chattie.

"Yes," answered Sir John, quietly.

"I don't," cried Ulrica, as she quickly donned her hat again. "I love real golden hair."

"So do I - when it is real," returned Chattie, dryly.

"Shall we rest here a little before we begin to climb up again?" asked Sir John of Ulrica.

"Please."

"All right. I'm not tired; so, while you sit, I will ramble about. Whistle for me when you go. I don't care for solitude, even in broad daylight, and this is a ghostly place, you know."

And Chattie disappeared as he spoke.

"Ghosts!" repeated Ulrica, as she seated herself on the moss-covered stones; "I suppose you have any number at the castle, Sir John?"

"I believe so," replied the young man, putting one foot on the low wall, and resting his elbow on his knee; "tradition credits us with the usual amount of murderers, robbers, and other unpleasant people."

"All old families have such legends, have they not?" continued Ulrica,

evading his earnest gaze. "At least, so Miss Wren tells me."

"Then it must be correct," said Sir John, with a mischievous movement at the corners of his mouth; "for Miss Wren is an authority on such matters. For my part, I think it brings our ancestors down to a very low level. In a hundred years hence perhaps the descendants of the man who is hanged for murder to-day will hold their heads high on that very account. The motive is the same. I would much rather revere the memory of an ancestor who, by sheer industry and perseverance, had made his way in life, fighting against every possible hardship and poverty.

"Now it is my turn to warn you. Don't let Lady Dunworthy hear these sentiments," said Ulrica, laughing lightly, "or, if I judge her right in the short time I have known her, I should say there would be warfare."

"You like my mother?" he asked quickly.

"Oh yes, of course. I am speaking in jest; she is very kind."

In her inmost heart, Ulrica was not quite sure on the point of Lady Dunworthy, but she determined, for Sir John's sake, to try and like her exceedingly.

"I am so glad you have met," he continued; "I hope you will be very

good friends."

"If it rests with me, I can at once promise it shall be so."

She lifted her eyes and just glanced at him; but as she met the strange warmth and tenderness in his, she turned her face away till the blush had faded again from the cream-white skin.

Sir John noticed that dawn of color and felt a new thrillat his heart.

He moved his foot and sat down beside her.

"Now we are alone, I want to say how happy it makes me to welcome you to my home," he said hurriedly.

"You are very kind; it is a great happiness to me to come."

Ulrica drew the glove nervously from her left hand.

"Is that really true?" he began, but before he could proceed further, the bushes parted and Chattie stood before them.

"The largest toad I ever saw in my life!" she exclaimed. "If you are

rested, Ulrica, let us go up to civilization again!"

"Why, Chattie, you aren't half a one!" Sir John laughed.
"Well, the toad makes up for me; he was the size of two!"

And Chattie began a rapid ascent.

The others followed her slowly and in silence.

Sir John made no offer of assistance to Ulrica; he simply drew her hard through his arm in a masterful kind of way which brought a heavenly sense of delight to himself, and a strange feeling of happiness to her, so new and so vague she could not define it properly.

At the top of the hill they paused, and Ulrica, slipping her hand from

his arm, plucked a tiny green leaf from a tree near.

Chattie had walked on.

"To remind me of my visit to the well," Ulrica said brightly, meeting an inquiry in his eyes.

"Will you give one to me?" he asked.

For answer, she placed it in his outstretched hand, and picked another for herself.

Sir John took out his pocket-book, dropped his treasure into its inner folds, and replaced it; then they walked on silently.

Connie looked up peevishly as they advanced.

"What a long time you have been!" she said sharply, annoyed to see them alone. "Lady Dunworthy sent out to say tea was served in the conservatory ages ago."

"I am sorry," Ulrica said, simply.

She moved on quickly to overtake Chattie, while Sir John again offered himself as a portable walking-stick, and by slow degrees wooed Miss Wren into a good temper.

#### CHAPTER VII.

THREE days later Connie departed from Bathurst Hall for Dunworthy Castle, accompanied by her maid and two enormous boxes, as if bound for a long sea voyage rather than a short visit to a country house.

Chattie executed a pas de seul on the grass as the carriage rolled away, and Ulrica could not repress a sigh of relief. She tried in vain to become friendly with Connie. The two girls had not a single thought in common.

She was growing so happy at Bathurst. Never before in her young life had she tasted the sweetness of home and warm affection such as was lavished on her now. Her anxiety about Sam, too, was decreased by another letter from him, telling her he hoped, before long, to travel to England and see her.

He enclosed a draft on a bank for an amount which Ulrica considered

The advent of this little bit of paper brought her mind from the present to the future. It would be the last remittance she would receive; and, as yet, she had made no plans.

It was pain to think of leaving all her new-found friends and happiness; but it had to be faced.

Inherent pride determined she must begin to form some arrangements

for her independence, and the sooner it was done the better.

Unconsciously Ulrica looked upon Guy in the light of a guardian and adviser, and, after reading Sam's letter through carefully, she resolved not to wait until her old friend was better, but to go at once to Guy, and have

a long conversation with him.

She had such vague ideas of money. Her purse had always been liberally filled, and her wants more than supplied. Even in the feminine delight of dresses she was unversed, as Sam had placed the furnishing of her wardrobe in the hands of one of the first-class Parisian modistes, and Ulrica had received fresh relays of garments without a single thought to their cost or their design.

Chattie finished her dance of triumph at Connie's absence, then fled after

Ulrica, who was mounting the stairs slowly.

"What shall we do?" she asked. "I feel as if I were a school-girl, and to-day was the annual wayze-goose, or bean-feast, or whatever they

call it."

"Your days appear to be composed of wayze-geese," remarked Basil, lazily, looking down on their approaching heads from the corridor. "My goodness, Chattie!" he continued, "what have you been doing? You are a perfect scarlet-runner!"

"Celebrating my sister's departure. I say, Basil, aren't you glad she is

gone - honor bright?"

Basil caught Ulrica's eye for a moment.

"Well, I am rather," he returned, laughing. "You see Connie has such

a lot of pride. She looks down on us."

"She has other fish to fry, my dear," replied Chattie, wisely. "Ulrica, get on your hat and come out, I won't walk you far."

"No; I must find Uncle Guy. I want to talk to him."

"Oh, bother business! you can do that another time. Look how lovely it is -- you can't refuse." "Please do come," said Basil, with a languishing look in his handsome

eyes. Ulrica laughed.

"Very well, then; but mind, Chattie, if I play this morning I must work this afternoon."

"I will bring your hat in a jiffy," cried Chattie, jumping up the stairs

two at a time, and speedily disappearing.

"I expect we shall have a jolly time, now Chattie has got rid of Connie," remarked Basil, as he swung himself onto the balustrades, "so I give you fair warning."

"I don't mind how much fun we have; it is all new to me, remember. Here

is Chattie back again! Why, Chattie, you must have flown."
"So I did—on the wings of love! Here you are Ulrica," handing over the broad-brimmed hat; "and now, where shall we go?"

"Why not stay in the grounds? it is so hot, Chattie." "You are so lazy, you mean," she retorted to Basil.

"Well, let us make a start anyhow," declared Ulrica, and she set an example.

As they were scampering through the hall, Guy opened his study door.

"Ulrica! Come here; I want you!"

Ulrica stopped at once, but Chattie interposed.

"Oh, Uncle Guy, we are just going out; don't keep her. Ulrica!"

But Ulrica had already slipped off her hat.

"You must go without me, Chattie," she said decidedly. Guy had gone into the study again and she followed.

"I am sorry to stop your walk, Ulrica."

"It does not matter; we were only going for a saunter;" she threw her hat down on a chair and pulled another up to the table; "and I wanted to see you. But are you not well, Uncle Guy?"

"Well?" he repeated, not meeting her glance. "Yes, Ulrica; quite

well. Why do you ask?"

"You look so worn and tired; you have been working too hard in this

hot weather; it has upset you."

Guy passed his hand over his brow a little languidly. He was indeed looking both worn and ill; there was a troubled expression in his eyes. "There has been a lot of sickness in the town, and they must be

attended to, poor things!" Guy said slowly.

Ulrica nodded her head and looked at him wistfully; she knew what

that attention meant.

"Ulrica," Guy said after a slight pause, "I want to speak to you very particularly. You must look upon me at this moment in the light of a guardian - not a tender, loving one like Sam Loudon, but a harsh ogre of the old type." He smiled faintly as he spoke.
"I do," answered Ulrica laughingly; "I do indeed, Uncle Guy. Do you

want to scold me? Have I been naughty?"

Guy turned his eyes steadily from her laughing, lovely face.

"Not naughty - only foolish," he said. "I have just heard that you have promised five hundred pounds to the hospital subscription."

"Well?" asked Ulrica mischievously.

"But it is not well," Guy replied; "the draft Sam sent you I know is large, but remember it is the last."

"I know that."

"Then don't you see how impossible --- "

"Oh, I have promised, and I must keep my promise. I shall have lots left for myself even then.

"I don't think I can allow it."

"Oh yes! you will. Dear, darling Uncle Guy, you will." Ulrica crept round and nestled her head on his shoulder.

Guy sat as in a trance; his lips were touching the hands of the woman he loved better than all the world. His heart was burning with the flood of passionate emotion that filled it; yet he sat silent and still, for hope was dead within him.

He knew Ulrica would never love him—he was too old, too quiet, too

grave, he told himself again and again.

His work lay before him - to pluck out the image of this girl from his

breast, and cheerfully witness her given to another.

Ulrica, bending over him, let her eyes wander to the writing-table—

they rested on a letter.

"Uncle Guy, what is that?" she asked hurriedly.

Guy looked round, and then tried to cover up the letter.

"Nothing," he said; "nothing." Ulrica simply drew the letter away.

"A dressmaker's bill. What have you to do with such a thing! For

me, too! Great Heavens! £483 11s. 4d. Oh," and Ulrica sat down suddenly; "how awful!"

"It is for a whole year," hurriedly said Guy. "Mrs. Loudon forwarded

it to me to-day. Sam does not know it."

Ulrica sat gazing at the bill.

"And I have spent all that on myself, while hundreds are starving!" "These things were bought of the first Parisian modiste, remember, and it includes your entire wardrobe, I should say."

"Yes, it does. But, oh, Uncle Guy, how terrible! I never knew about

it. Sam always paid every bill."

"Now, you see, I was right about the hospital. Send one hundred pounds—it is ample."
"No." Ulrica rose.

"I shall not break my promise. In the future I shalf be more careful. Uncle Guy, will you do something for me?"

"Anything in the world that is possible, Ulrica; you know that."
"Then find me work. I don't care what it is. I will become a servant, go into a shop, turn governess - I could do that, for I am well educated.

I must work, you know!" Ulrica watched his face in silence. It looked grave.

"You will help me!"

His struggle ended - a light had come.

"I will speak to my mother — she is always wise."

Ulrica nodded her head.

"Yes, that will be best, dear, kind Uncle Guy! How happy I ought to be! A few months ago alone and friendless, save for Sam; now I am rich in so many friends - you first, Mrs. Strong, Chattie, Basil --- "

"And Sir John Dunworthy," added Guy suddenly. Ulrica's face flushed crimson; she picked up her hat.

"I know so - so little of him," she murmured confusedly. "Now promise you will speak to your mother this very, very day. I am anxious to have all settled. And now I must go; Chattie will grow impatient. Good-bye for the present!"

She kissed her hand and flitted away, leaving Guy overwhelmed with

pain and misery.

"She loves him!" he said to himself; "the blow has come. Well, I have been an old fool. Oh, God, give me strength to harden my heart and grudge them not one moment of their happiness."

He rose and paced the floor for a second or two.

"And now I must speak to my mother. Ulrica must not - cannot go into the world alone. My fair white lily, you are too sweet, too good for the evils, the troubles you would meet. No, no, until your lover claims you, your home must be here -my mother must be yours, her love shared with me."

And later on he broached this to Mrs. Strong, whose whole affection had

turned to the girl thus brought to her house.

"She shall not leave me, Guy," she said; "Ulrica is too young, too beautiful to live alone. She shall be my daughter - Millie's sister and 7ours."

Guy stifled a sigh, but said nothing. His secret was well buried then,

even from a mother's eyes.

# CHAPTER VIII.

"TLRICA, Ulrica, where are you?"
"Here."

"Where?"

"By the hammock."

"Phew! What a race I have had, to be sure! Basil, great lazy thing, why could you not shriek out?" demanded Chattie, sinking exhausted on the grass.
"You made so much noise yourself, you would not have heard me," re-

turned Basil with irritating quietness.

"What is your liaste, Chattie?" asked Ulrica.

"Oh, I forgot all about it!" cried Chattie, breaking off her frown at Basil to smile at her friend. "Lady Dunworthy has sent over; there is to be a ball to-night—a sort of impromptu affair; she wants us all to come. Ah, I thought so!"

This triumphantly to Basil, who suddenly threw away his book and

started into a sitting position.

" Balls are not for little boys."

"Are you going?" rudely demanded Basil.

" Of course."

"Heavens! what has Dunworthy done! Only wear a yellow gown and you will look splendid; those green goggles of yours will show up so well."
"Basil, be quiet!" Ulrica reproved with a smile.

"Let him go on," observed Chattie in a tone that gave hints of deep and future vengeance, her green eyes flashing brilliantly; "there will come a day of reckoning. I can wait. But, Ulrica, isn't it jolly! What shall you wear?"

"I shall not go," replied Ulrica.

"Not go?"

"I cannot, Chattie; this" - touching her black dress - " will prevent You see, it is impossible."

"Oh, dear, then I don't care to go one single bit!" Chattie groaned dis-

mally. "I forgot all about that. Please forgive me."

"And I meant to ask you for the first dance," murmured Basil with a languishing sigh.

"Dance it with me instead," suggested Chattie easily.

"Can you dance?"

"Can I dance? Herodotus isn't in it with me!"

"Charlotte!" cried Ulrica, laughing.

"Well, you know who I mean," returned Chattie irreverently - "the young woman who hopped before the king."

"I will give you a nicely-bound edition of 'Mangnall's Questions' for

your next birthday," Basil promised condescendingly.

"Yah!" Chattie retorted rudely. "You don't know yourself who it was: but, Ulrica, to business - what shall I do? Shall I go?"

"Go - of course; and I will be your maid, if you will let me.

have you got to wear?"

"Let me see," began Chattie thoughtfully; "that pink striped affairmy blue. I have nothing — absolutely nothing!" she ended dismally.

"Will you let me have my own way for once?" inquired Ulrica suddenly.

"My sweet lamb! as if I could refuse you anything."

"Then I prepare you a gown for to-night - that is settled."

"Ulrica!"

"It is settled," said Ulrica severely.

Chattie bent over the chair and kissed the soft white throat, while Basil threw bits of grass at her.

"Who brought the message, Chattie?" he asked.

"I don't know - some man or other. He is in the drawing-room, talking to Mammie Strong and mother.

And here he is !" exlaimed Basil.

" It's Mott." "So it is."

Ulrica looked up carelessly as the new comer approached; she was busily employed on a small cotton frock for one of Mrs. Strong's village children.

Three days had passed since she had given her promise to remain as the daughter of Guy's mother, and she was still lost in the wonderful and new-

found happiness of a mother all to herself.

"How d'ye do?" said Chattie.

Basil got on his legs, and Ulrica slipped one of her cool, small hands into Mr. Mott's.

"We are debating the all-important and never-dull question of dress," she said, with a smile.

" For the ball?"

Mr. Mott drew up a chair and seated himself; he looked almost handsome in his rough riding-coat.

"Of course you are coming, Miss Messenger?"

Ulrica shook her head.

"No!" he exclaimed. "I am afraid there will be universal disappoint-

"You are very kind," said Ulrica, with a short laugh. "I had no idea I was so important, but here is one who must console all for my absence." "Oh, Miss Chattie is coming, then!" said Mr. Mott. "May I have the pleasure of a dance?"

Chattie blushed slightly.

"Thank you," she said simply. "It is my first big dance," she added. "Ah, then you must enjoy it," observed Mr. Mott, his teeth gleaming as his lips parted in a smile.

He had drawn out a dainty note-case and booked the engagement.

"Where is Jack?" demanded Basil.

"Gone with a party of guns to some distant spot. The ladies, headed by Miss Wren, join them at luncheon."

Ulrica was gazing at her work with a moody brow; she was measuring

two sides of her garment.

"There is something wrong," she said; "I must have dropped a piece."

"Basil, go and look for it," commanded Chattie. " No, no, I will go."

Ulrica rose, but the two young people fled off at one and the same time, leaving her alone with Mr. Mott, just what she did not want, for in some strange indefinable way Ulrica was never comfortable in the presence of this man. A woman's intuition is seldom wrong, and from the very first Ulrica had conceived a distrust and dislike to Horace Mott.

At last Ulrica forced herself to speak.

"Do you stay long in this part of the world?" she asked.

Mr. Mott woke from his dream.

"It is uncertain; Lady Dunworthy presses me for a lengthy visit, and certainly the temptation is great — pleasant quarters, delightful hosts, and other things."

His eyes explained what this meant, but Ulrica carefully oided looking

"Dunworthy Castle is a lovely place," she said instead.
"Very, and Sir John is worthy of it. We are not exactly 'chums,' but I know enough of John Dunworthy to testify to his thorough manliness and 200dness."

Against herself the pink flush dawned on Ulrica's cheeks, and grew and

grew till they were like roses.

Mr. Mott whistled softly to himself.

"So -so," was his muttered thought; "I was right -love's young dream. A pity to disturb it, but --- " The rest was lost in a meaning smile. "Yes," he continued easily, "Dunworthy is a downright good fellow, and I sincerely trust he will not make a fool of himself, and get landed by some shallow society girl with no brains beyond her dressmaker. There are several specimens of that sort at the castle now, and all-industrious."

Chattie appeared at this instant, and after a little more conversation,

Mr. Mott departed.

"He is very pleasant, but I don't quite like him," said Chattie.

Except at meal-time, Ulrica had not seen Guy since her interview with him in his study; she knew that he must have learnt her consent to remain at Bathurst, but he had said nothing to her, and circumstances had prevented her from speaking to him.

As she was walking through the hall to the stairs, after dinner, to put the finishing-touches to Chattie's dress, mysteriously hidden in her room, Guy

opened his study-door.

"Your money is here, Ulrica," he said, as his eyes rested on the fair ap-"Shall I give it to you now?"

"If you like, Uncle Guy."

He turned into his room and Ulrica followed.

She wore a long-trailing gown of some black transparent material, caught in loose folds at the waist by a broad black sash. Her magnificent hair was coiled in one thick mass at the back of her head.

Sombre as was her garb, she seemed to illuminate the room with her beauty. Dr. Strong put down his cigar and went to a table; he produced

a small packet of bank-notes.

"I have had another letter from Mrs. Loudon to-day, Ulrica," he observed, as he handed it to her, "giving me a detailed account of Sam's stewardship - all the expenses of the last year. You would like to see it, would you not?"

Ulrica smiled and tossed the bank-notes to and fro in her hand.

"No, thank you, Uncle Guy. I am content to let things be forgotten. Sam always did right.

She hesitated for an instant, then said:

"Your mother has told you?"

"That you have decided to remain? Yes." "And you are glad?" she asked, softly.

"I think your decision is a wise one."

Guy took up his cigar again, and leaned back against the mantel-board. Ulrica was silent for a moment, then she put down the papers she held, and moved across to him.

"Say you are glad I am going to stay," she said, almost petulantly.

He gazed into the violet depths of her eyes for an instant.

"I am glad, dear," he answered.

"I have wanted you to say that," Ulrica said, putting her hand caressingly on his arm; "it makes me realize that I have indeed a home at last. Ah, how good she is—how sweet! She knows just the very words to touch one's heart. I hope I may grow like her."

"You could have no better wish" - Guy moved a little beneath her

touch—"for, if angels do live on earth, Ulrica, my mother is one."

Ulrica bent her head suddenly, and touched his hand with her lips, then walked away quickly.

"I must go," she said, with forced lightness, for her heart was full; "Chattie is waiting."

By the aid of Mary, Ulrica had succeeded in arranging a ball-dress,

worthy, as the maid said, of a queen.

Chattie was not allowed to look at herself until everything was put on. Then she was led triumphantly by Ulrica to the glass, and stared speechless at her own reflection.

"Yes, I am really pretty," she said, after a long gaze. "Ulrica, what have you done to me? I don't believe there will be as pretty a dress there!

Won't Connie stare!"

Ulrica drew on a pair of long white gloves, then called Mrs. Wren from the adjoining room to survey her handiwork.

Chattie flew to her mother.

"Mamma, look at me! Has not Ulrica made me beautiful?"

Mrs. Wren uttered a little cry of astonishment.

"What have you done to her?" she cried. "She looks perfect." A long pause, then: "Quite perfect!"

#### CHAPTER IX.

ULRICA was out early the next morning; Mrs. Strong had several missions in the village, which she willingly and gladly undertook to

She had just left the lodge-gates, and was beginning to pace the long, white, dusty lane, when she heard rapid sounds from behind, and turned to

see Sir John Dunworthy ride up.

He dismounted quickly, and came forward, leading his horse.

"I am in luck !" he cried; "another moment and you would have been gone!"

Ulrica shifted her basket to shake hands with him, experiencing a decided thrill of pleasure at the unexpected meeting.

"Dissipation has no ill-effect on you, I see," she said, smiling. "I have left Chattie sound asleep in bed, and from the close-drawn look of Basil's blinds, I should say he was similarly occupied. They came home very late."

"I have served a long apprenticeship," Sir John returned; "a little dancing, more or less, does not affect me. But where are you off to so

early, Miss Messenger?"

"To the village, on an errand for Mrs. Strong, and I must not waste any time."

Sir John glanced down the lane.

"It looks lonely," he said musingly. "Miss Messenger, may I come with you?"

"But your horse?" asked Ulrica, feeling at once pleased and shy.

"I will leave him in care of Barnes at the lodge—only say I may come."
"If you care to—yes," murmured the girl. Sir John led his steed to the lodge, and having disposed of it satisfactorily, hastened back to Ulrica.

"You don't ask me what I have come for," he observed, as they turned

and began to walk on.

"It is not my business," Ulrica said, very demurely.

"As it happens, it just is," was Sir John's reply. "I am the bearer of an invitation from my mother, Miss Messenger, asking the pleasure of your company at dinner this evening. We shall be quite quiet, only the houseparty. I want Strong, Chattie, and Basil as well."

"I will come, certainly."

Sir John's face shone with satisfaction

"Horace Mott wanted to bring the message, but I was too sharp for him; he got before me yesterday, for I had fully intended riding over myself." "Did you have a pleasant evening?" asked Ulrica after awhile; "but

how rude I am! Of course you did."

"So, so," he replied; "it was too hot altogether for dancing. By the way, I must compliment you on your skill as a dress-maker." Ulrica laughed.

" Didn't she look pretty?"

"Pretty is not the word; she looked most fascinating - too fascinating, I think, for the rest of the fair sex. I shall not forget the look of astonishment on Connie Wren's face when her sister appeared on Basil's arm;" and Sir John laughed heartily.

"But she was pleased, of course," said Ulrica quickly.

"Oh, ot course," was the answer, given dryly; and, as he spoke, the young man reached out his hand for Ulrica's well-stocked basket.

"Oh, Sir John!" she cried, "please, please do not! What will people

say if they see you carrying a market-basket?"

"What they please," he replied, smiling down into the violet eyes uplifted to him.

They walked on in silence for a few minutes.

"It seems such an age since we met," he said at last, breaking the "Only about a week," observed Ulrica. "You have been so busy."

"Have you missed me much?" he asked eagerly; then, as if ashamed of his conceit, he went on hurriedly: "The fact is, you see, a fellow must do the polite to people staying in his house. Confound them all! I beg your pardon, Miss Messenger, but they are such bores! However, it pleases my mother, so --- "

"So you submit. Have you heard the news?"

"No!" he turned abruptly to her.

"I am going to stay here always; Mrs. Strong wants me to call her mother."

He drew a long breath.

"I am so glad!" was all he said, but the fervor of his glance spoke more, and Ulrica thrilled with the sudden happiness that came over her.

"So we shall be neighbors," she went on quickly; "we little thought that morning we met in the rain at Spa, that such a thing would ever be did we, Sir John?"

"No," he replied, watching the color come and go in her cheeks.

-I wish we were there now!"

Ulrica looked up. " Why?" she asked.

"Because—oh, because it was so pretty at Spa," he finished lamely, balancing the basket in the air.

"It is much prettier here," observed Ulrica reprovingly.

"Because, then, it was at Spa we first met, at Spa you promised I should be your friend; is that not sufficient reason that I should wish to be there again?"

Ulrica's hands trembled; she was pale now, but she did not speak.

Sir John suddenly came to a standstill.

"I want to ask you something. I want to speak to you - I must speak to you."

"I hear some one coming!" cried Ulrica, turning suddenly away from his

impassioned glance.

Sir John looked down the lane.

"So there is, confound it!" he muttered. Then he came nearer the girl. "Promise me that you will give me five minutes to-night. I must speak to you, or I shall go mad."

Ulrica had turned almost white; his vehemence frightened her.

"It is Uncle Guy!" she half whispered. "Don't come any farther; he will drive me."

"But you promise?" urged Sir John.

"Yes, I promise," faltered the girl. Then Guy drew up beside them, and in another moment she was whirling away from her lover, her heart beating wildly, her hands trembling.

Guy read the signs; he understood too well what it meant, but he said

nothing.

All day Ulrica lived as in a dream; she saw nothing but that passionate, pleading face, heard but that low, fervent voice, and she dreaded, yet longed for the night when she should meet Sir John again.

At last it came. Chattie would not go to dinner, so it was only Ulrica, Dr. Strong and Basil who went. Connie Wren received Ulrica with ill-

concealed rudeness, and inwardly was almost mad with rage.

Sir John did not go near her; he only bowed, and Ulrica found herself taken in to dinner by Horace Mott, who transgressed the laws of etiquette by the earnest way in which he gazed at her.

Would that dinner ever end? thought the girl, her hands and limbs

trembling. And why—oh, why did he not come and speak to her?

She tried to talk to Mr. Mott, but in vain. All her mind was on her love, and words failed her.

It was a great relief when Lady Dunworthy gave the signal, and the ladies sailed from the room.

Ulrica found herself deserted then, for Connie purposely avoided her,

and Lady Dunworthy was much occupied.

After a while, however, one of the guests, a Lady Grace Monkhouse, drawn by the girl's sweet face, suggested kindly that they should stroll into the grounds, and Ulrica gladly consented.

They walked up and down till the gentlemen appeared,

"At last the tobacco-parliament is dissolved. What do you men talk about?" laughed Lady Grace as Sir John hurried up to them.

"If you like, we will invite you to one," he answered lightly, his eyes

fixed on the girl's face.

"Well, now you are come, you ought really to take Miss Messenger to see the moonlight on the slope over there. It is lovely! You must go. Miss Messenger and I have been once, and were lost in admiration."

"Will Miss Messenger take me?" he asked, softly.

Ulrica lifted her heavily-fringed lids, and their eyes met.

Lady Grace moved away with a smile and parting word. Still they stood silent — a silence full of the mute language of love.

At last Sir John spoke.

"Will you come?" was all he said.

He could not say more then; his eyes were dazzled, his heart intoxi-

cated with the greatness of his happiness.

Ulrica turned at once. They moved out of the moonlight into the shadows of the trees, whose branches whispered and rustled in the faint night-breeze as they passed.

Ulrica was in a land of enchantment, absorbed, bewildered in the mys-

terious yet wonderful atmosphere that surrounded her.

She had followed at his word. Led by this strange magic she would have followed him on as involuntarily as the dead leaf is carried by the passing wind.

They reached the spot on which they had sat the morning of her first

visit to Dunworthy.

They stood silent, and looked over the sloping grounds bathed in Dian's The sound of faint laughter was borne to their ears. Sir silver light. John woke from his dream. He stretched out his hand and clasped hers. "Ulrica!"

Slowly her head was raised, and her eyes met his.

"Ilove you! You know - you have seen," he cried passionately and suddenly. "From the very first moment I saw you my heart went out to you. I have loved you all the time. You - you love me, Ulrica?"

"Yes," she whispered, meeting his gaze bravely now; "yes, I love you." He drew her slight form into his arms, and pressed his lips to hers, while the trees rustled gently overhead, as if they rejoiced at human happi-

ness.

"My darling, my sweet, my fair love!" he murmured, holding her passionately to his breast. "It seems too good, too wonderful to be real. I have dreamt of this, Ulrica—dreamt that I held you in my arms, and kissed your lips thus, but the dream vanished, and I was alone and wretched; and now-now it is true. You are here. All doubt and fear over! I can scarcely believe it. Tell me again you love me - again and again that I may know I am awake, and not dreaming!"

Ulrica carried his hand to her lips; then nestled her head on his arm.

"I love you — I love you — I love you!" she whispered.

"And you would not listen to me this morning. How cruel you were, You nearly broke my heart."

She lifted her face to his.

"Forgive me," she murmured. "I was startled; I did not know. Your words and face almost frightened me."

"And now you have no fear?" he smiled. "My own darling! Great Heavens! how have I lived so long without you?"

"We must go," said Ulrica, hurriedly awakened to the reality; "they

will miss us."

"What if they do? What does it matter? To-morrow all the world shall know our secret - know that you, my sweet one, will be my wife." Ulrica started at the word, a tiny dark cloud passed over the brilliancy of her joy, a doubt was in her heart.

"Your mother?" she whispered.

John Dunworthy took her hands and carried them to his lips.
"She will love you for my sake," he said, earnestly. "Be brave, my

darling; remember how precious you are to me."

"I will forget all the world when I think of that," whispered Ulrica; then she put her hand in his and they went slowly back through the trees. As they approached the lawn Sir John stopped.

"Shall I speak to-night, my darling," he said tenderly; "or wait till to-

"To-morrow," Ulrica answered hurriedly; "to-morrow!"

Then they left the shadows and mingled with the others scattered on the moonlit lawn.

# CHAPTER X.

LADY DUNWORTHY was sitting in her boudoir the next morning.

The guests were all arranged for the day, and Lady Dunworthy was free. The men were bound for a long shooting expedition in some neighboring covers, and had departed in the early hours of the morning. The ladies dispersed according to their various pleasures.

It was, therefore, with considerable surprise that Lady Dunworthy found

her door opened and her son appear.

"Have you not started, John?" she asked quickly. "I thought you were bound for a good day's sport at Pleydell Park?"

"The others have gone," returned Sir John, pulling up a chair and seating himself upon it. "I handed the office of host over to Mayne, for this day only, greatly to his delight."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Lady Dunworthy, frowning slightly and glancing at her son's attire - an irreproachable riding-suit. "Pray, may I ask

why?"

"I wanted to see you this morning and have a chat," said Sir John, blushing a little, and feeling that he had a more difficult task before him than he had imagined.

Lady Dunworthy's brow cleared

"I am at your service, my dear," she said promptly. "I hope there is nothing wrong. I heard from Morgan last night; he tells me the rents are very good indeed, and the Glencoe mines also."
"Yes," said Sir John, dreamily—his thoughts were far away from the

Glencoe mines.

"So you need not trouble about that. Burnet writes, also, very

Lady Dunworthy tapped her desk with her ivory-handled pen for several seconds, while Sir John pulled the dogskin glove he held till it was almost unfit for use.

"What is it, John?" asked Lady Dunworthy, suddenly,

He got off his chair, and walked across the room to the fireplace, standing, although there was no fire, in the attitude so dear to the masculine heart. Somehow he felt stronger in this position.

"It is rather a surprise, mother," he said slowly, glancing down at his feet. Lady Dunworthy put down her pen, rose, and sailed towards him

with an inquiring air.

"You have often told me, mother," continued Sir John with growing confidence, "that - that I ought to think of marrying. Well, I have determined to take your advice."

Lady Dunworthy gave vent to a little exclamation. Then she suddenly wound her arms round her son, much to his surprise, and embraced him

warmly.

"I am so glad, my dear boy," she said genially - "so glad! Ah, I am not so blind, after all. I have seen it all the while. Dear girl, she will make you very happy, I know."

"You have seen it all the while!" echoed Sir John in amazement.

"Yes, yes," nodded Lady Dunworthy; "and I am delighted. You have my warmest sympathy and blessing. She is a girl after my own heart."

"But you know so little of her," cried Sir John, still incredulous of his

hearing, though his face beamed.

"My dear John, how can you say such a thing? Why, I have known Constance Wren ever since she was a baby, and therefore—"

"Constance Wren!" interrupted Sir John, growing suddenly pale, and

speaking very quietly; "did you think she was the woman I love?" Lady Dunworthy's hands dropped from their hold on her son's shoul-

"Of course I thought so," she replied sharply; "if Constance is not your choice, may I ask who is?"

"Ulrica Messenger," said Sir John with heightened color, meeting his

mother's glance without flinching.

She sank slowly into the nearest chair.

"This is no trifling matter, John," she said coldly; "if you are joking, please believe that I do not like it."

"Joking!" cried the young man; "joking when I speak of her! Mother, you don't understand me!"

"I begin to think I do not," answered Lady Dunworthy, frigidly.

"Yes; Ulrica Messenger is the woman I love," Sir John went on recklessly, pained beyond measure by his mother's coldness; "the woman, please God, who will become my wife! What have you to say against her?"

"A girl of no birth, no antecedents, no relations -nothing; a mere no-

body," replied Lady Dunworthy, contemptuously.

"These are no blots on her fair name, no stains on her pure nature," cried Sir John, hotly. "You speak the sophistry of the world. Pshaw! I am sick of such narrow-minded prejudices, mother!"

Lady Dunworthy rose majestically; the very folds of her dress uttered a

mute protest to her son's words.

"Have you anything more to say?" she asked, frigidly.

"Nothing, except that Ulrica Messenger will be my wife, and that I shall announce the fact to-day."

Lady Dunworthy turned away. Sir John took two strides after her. "Mother," he said, hurriedly, "be just, be kind; she is so young; so very beautiful! I love her so much; you will not condemn that love? You will not cast a shadow on its brightness? You will give us your blessing? What are birth and family after all, if we are happy? Dearest mother, you will be kind to her?"

Lady Dunworthy met her son's eyes for one minute. She drew herself

"You are my son, John," she said, with injured dignity. "As your

future wife, I will make Miss Messenger welcome."

Sir John kissed her broad cheek. His face flushed with pleasure. His mother's voice was not cordial, but was perhaps natural. The news had surprised her; things would be better in a day or two. And seizing his hat and gloves, he departed in haste to meet his love.

Lady Dunworthy stood motionless as Sir John disappeared. She was

overwhelmed with her son's intelligence.

A dull, resentful feeling rose in her heart against Ulrica. She had arranged her son's marriage this long time past.

Connie Wren was to be his wife. A girl whom she knew so well, and over whom she would have been able to rule with all her accustomed power.

Nothing unconventional, strange or disagreeable about Connie.

Now, all this was upset, and by a girl about whom she knew absolutely nothing; moreover, with that objectionable of all things, a suspicious "city" parentage, whose very beauty was against her, belonging, as it did, to no particular family.

It was a bitter blow.

Yes, she must submit, for her son was complete master of his home and estates, and, if he willed, she could be regulated to her dower-house to-morrow.

And Sir John was in earnest.

Lady Dunworthy had never seen him so roused before - had never read strength of purpose and determination so clearly expressed on his features

Too agitated to continue her letters, Lady Dunworthy paced up and down; two bright spots of color were fastened on her cheeks, her hands were clasped restlessly together.

A fire of anger and resentment burned in her breast against Ulrica, Guy,

Bathurst Hall, and fate!

She determined she would drive over before nightfall, and have a long conversation with Dr. Strong.

He was the person to be blamed. What right had he to bring a name-

less girl into their midst?

While she was walking to and fro and thinking, there came a gentle tap at the door.

"Come in!" she cried sharply.

The door opened and Connie appeared, very fresh and smart in a white

"Dear Lady Dunworthy," said Connie sweetly, "I have come to chat to you about this cushion. I waited till I knew you were free."

"Iohn has just left me," observed Lady Dunworthy abruptly.

She moved to her desk and sat down again.

"Perhaps I am troubling you now?" Conni ded with gentle timidity.

"No, my dear; you are not troubling me," was delivered with

a heavy sigh.

"But something is," murmured Connie, gliding near. "Oh, let me know, and I will try and comfort you."

"You cannot," replied Lady Dunworthy gloomily. "Why are you not

out, Connie?"

"I know you wanted this cushion finished, and I like working."

Lady Dunworthy sighed again. How different life would have looked

had he only chosen this girl!

"Now, I know you are worried," said Connie quickly, "and so I will not bother you with any stupid questions about the work; another time will do."

Lady Dunworthy threw down her pen.

"I am more than worried—I am terribly distressed, Connie. John is going to be married."

Connie's hands closed over her work. Lady Dunworthy was gazing out

of the window, so did not see her start.

"Yes," said Connie very quietly after a pause, not moving, "to whom!"

"To that Miss Messenger!"

A wave of color rushed over Connie's face; it dyed even the small hands

that clinched the rich satin.

"I hope he will be happy," she said, uttering the platitude after another pause very steadily; "he deserves it. I will come in about the cushion by-and-by. It——"

"Poor girl," murmured Lady Dunworthy, as the door closed on the

graceful form; "she bears it well. Ah, that is where blood tells!"

She might have modified that statement could she have followed Connie as she rushed madly to her room, dashed the cushion on the floor, and crushed the rich silks beneath her feet.

To be defeated — ousted by a girl whom no one knew — who came from

nowhere! It was too bitter - it was too much!

Connie paced up and down her room, her arms folded over her breast,

her lips pressed close together.

As much as lay in her cold heart, she loved Sir John Dunworthy—she prized his home, his name, his position; for years, since she could think at all, she had planned to be his wife; and now—now, on the very brink of success—for Sir John had paid her real attention (at least so she had chosen to think) before he went abroad—the prize was snatched from her by this outcast—this vagrant! Oh, it was more than she could bear!

She picked up her garden-hat, and went out into the grounds; it seemed as though indoors the air choked her. She made her way to a secluded

spot, and gave way to her angry thoughts.

Little did she think that she was observed, that her gestures of annoy-

ance were noted by an onlooker.

From behind a group of trees Horace Mott had seen Connie approach,

and a sinister smile curled his lip.

"So, my pretty maiden, you too have learned the news! It has upset your plans, no doubt. This is not what you have waited for so long. Be of good cheer; their dream will be brief. I hold you in contempt, you poor, paltry, selfish thing! Nevertheless I am going to work on your side. You hate your rival. I hate mine — John Dunworthy!" His brow grewdark. "I have a long score of hatred to pay him, and would have done it in any case, but doubly so now when love and jealousy fan the flame. Love—love! I"—he laughed softly, and turned away down the path to the old

well - "I, who thought my heart dead, barren, to be filled with a wild passion of love for this cream-white, violet-eyed girl, who shrinks from me and gives her caresses to him. Well—well, all in good time! I can wait, for I hold the trump-card."

He was at the bottom of the path as he uttered these words aloud.

He stopped, looked round, and gave a low whistle.

In a few minutes the branches were parted, and a tall man, half hidden

in the folds of a large cloak, crept out and joined him.

Their words were few and swift, but as they were exchanged, a look of satisfaction, even triumph, spread on Horace Mott's face, and lingered there.

Meanwhile, flushed with joy, Sir John had mounted his horse and ridden fleetly to Bathurst Hall.

Chattie met him in the doorway. He asked hurriedly for Ulrica.

"I believe you and Ulrica have some plot on hand," she said aggrievedly. Sir John laughed.

"What do you say to a plot ending in marriage?"

Chattie uttered a shriek, then shook Sir John wildly by the hand, and rushed off to the library, where Ulrica was seated, writing to Sam.

"Johnnie Jack is out on the lawn. He wants you — he told me himself

-so you had better go," she cried breathlessly.

Ulrica rose at once, the gleam of irrepressible gladness lighting up her glorious orbs, while Chattie fled up-stairs to tell her mother and Mrs. Strong

Sir John rose from the low garden-chair as Ulrica approached him. Without a word he drew her hand through his arm, and they wandered slowly down to the stream that meandered through the bottom of the grounds. Here they were alone save for the babbling music of the brook and the birds' notes; there was not a sound to break their solitude.

Sir John drew the slender form to his breast, bent his head, and kissed

the sweet trembling lips.

"My own!" he said tenderly; my very - very own!"

Ulrica looked up at him; there was a mute inquiry in her eyes. "Sweet, I have spoken," he answered, reading her wish. "My mother will welcome you as a daughter."

Ulrica drew a deep breath.

"Ah, now I am content," she whispered, gently. "I was afraid your mother might not like me, and I did not want to be the cause of a quarrel between you two."

"And you are happy now?"

"Happy? Too—too happy!" she murmured, resting her head on his shoulder. "Will it last, dear?"

"A lifetime, I trust," he said solemnly.

"What are you thinking of?" he asked at last, breaking the silence. "That God is good!" she answered slowly. "It is this that I have pined for all my life — to be loved, to feel there is some one who cares for me through all time - that I am dear to some heart. Ah, how gloriously

great it seems! What can I do to show my gratitude?" "It is your due, my darling," he said tenderly; "you are so sweet and

good an angel."

Ulrica shook her head with a smile.

"A very human angel," she said. Then suddenly hiding her face on his coat, she whispered: "But I love you.—I love you, my darling!"

Then they strolled slowly on the stream's brink, weaving in its murmurs with their golden dream, and breathing their tender vows of eternal constancy and love.

The morning slipped away before they were half told, and the luncheon-

gong broke harshly on the delicate train of their thoughts.

"One o'clock!" cried Ulrica with a start. "I had no idea it was so late. We have been out here an hour."

Sir John laughed as he kissed her again, and they turned to the house.

"Now, we must tell our news," he said gaily.

Ulrica's color rose.

"Must we?" she asked in a low tone.

"Did you think I was going to keep you in a corner all to myself? I expect by this time it is pretty well known. Chattie will have told everybody."

This statement was verified, for as they entered the hall they met Mrs.

Strong on her way to the luncheon.

She stopped and glanced at the two happy faces with the great secret written so plainly on their features.

"My daughter will not stay with me long," she whispered, as she kissed

Ulrica tenderly. "God bless you both!"

Guy strode in through the wide porch at this moment, and he took in the truth at a glance.

He grasped Sir John's hand warmly and silently, then turned to Ulrica. "What can I wish little Rica that she will not have?" he said lightly, though his face was very pale. "May every earthly happiness be yours, dear!"

Ulrica followed her lover into the dining-room with something like a mist of tears in her eyes, but Chattie's exuberant spirits and merry words soon banished emotion, and they were all laughing and gossiping when a foot-

man approached Sir John, and spoke to him in low tones.

"Good Heavens!" he exclaimed, rising to his feet. Ulrica looked up in affright, and Chattie started. "There has been a gun-accident," explained Sir John, "and Mott is badly hurt. My mother has sent for me. Will you ride back with me, Strong?"

"Willingly," answered Guy, rising at once.

"Don't be alarmed, my darling," whispered Sir John to Ulrica, who had turned pale; "these sort of things are always exaggerated. I expect it is only a scratch. I will return at once and tell you all about it."

"If your mother wants you, stay," she answered; "you must not neglect your duties. I know you would come if you could, and I am very happy."

"This will prevent my mother coming to you this afternoon, too," he said as they stood in the hall, while Dr. Strong got together one or two things he might want. "You will not mind, my darling?"

"No, no," she cried quickly; "I do not expect it. Do not speak of it." Guy came out of his room, and Ulrica stood waving her hand to her

lover till he had vanished from sight.

The two men rode on in silence; Guy could not bring himself to talk. The light of happiness on the other's face was absolute torture to im.

Fortunately Sir John was so wrapped in his thoughts, he did not notice

the grave, almost taciturn manner of his friend

Not till they were approaching Dunworthy Castle did Guy Strong speak; then he said suddenly:

"Dunworthy, you have spoken to your mother?"

Sir John started from his dreams.

"Yes," he replied quickly.

"And she does not object?"

" No."

Guy noticed the tiny frown on the handsome face.

"Of course, she was surprised," went on Sir John; "but that will wear off. If she talks to you, Strong, remember I am firm. Nothing will move me. I love Ulrica. She shall be my wife?'

"I will remember."

A slight pause, and then Guy said, speaking slowly:

"I hope there will be no unpleasantness. Lady Dunworthy is ambitious and proud, and Ulrica is ——"

"My equal!" said Sir John promptly.

Dr. Strong did not answer.

He was beset by doubts and fears. Ought he not to tell this man the truth of Ulrica's parentage? Was it right to let her go to his home, perhaps some day to be despised for her father's sake?

He was terribly distressed — this fact from him might turn the tide, break

off the match, and tear their love-dream asunder.

No, he could not do it, though he loved her so much—though to call her wife would be to him the greatest of all joys—by that very love he could not do it.

No one knew but himself—the secret was safe; and once Lady Dunworthy, she could defy the world's venemous jealousy and cruel tongue.

"I knocked all that on the head this morning," declared Sir John, breaking in on his thoughts. "My mother holds the stereotyped views; unless one's ancestors came over with the Conqueror, one is nobody; but I have very different ideas. Let Ulrica's birth be of the lowest, I love her—she will be my wife!"

The castle was in confusion when they arrived.

Lady Dunworthy welcomed Dr. Strong warmly, and conducted him her-

self to the wounded man.

Sir John found, after all, his services were not urgently required, and when he had paid a visit to Horace Mott, who still remained insensible, he strode along the corridor to his "den," feeling extremely wrathful with his mother for bringing him away from Ulrica so needlessly.

He gave orders to have the dog-cart prepared; he would drive back without delay, and was opening the door of his room when his eye caught a

figure coming towards him.

It was Connie—a large garden hat thrown over her flaxen curls, a basket on her arm, and large gauntlet gloves covering her white hands.

"Where are you off to?" he asked with a smile.

"To get some grapes for poor Mr. Mott. Is it not dreadful?" with a graceful shudder.

"Very," replied Sir John; "but you must not be alarmed; he will soon be all right. Strong is with him. You are looking quite pale, Miss Wren."

Connie smiled faintly; she bent her head over her basket.

"I have to congratulate you, Sir John," she said slowly. "I wish you every happiness."

"Thank you," answered the young man; then he stood aside, and Connie fluttered on.

Sir John strode into the room with an easy look on his face.
"Whatever my mother may have thought," was his mental assurance as he sat down and wrote an order to his jeweller in London to send down some rings at once, "I am positive Connie had no more idea of marrying me than she had of marrying that - that doormat."

Wherein he showed very clearly that the minds of the male beings are not endowed with that amount of perspicuity which dwells in the bosom of

the gentler sex.

### CHAPTER XI.

AR. MOTT'S accident did not prove very serious, but it served as an

excuse to Lady Dunworthy to postpone her visit to Ulrica.

Aweek went by, and then Sir John felt he could stand it no longer. The slight to Ulrica was galling to him, so he went straight to his mother, and spoke plainly to her, with the result that Lady Dunworthy ordered her barouche, and drove over to Bathurst Hall.

Sir John was delighted beyond measure as he beheld his mother and his promised wife driving back together; man-like, he did not think of what

lay beneath their calm exterior.

Guy had not seen Lady Dunworthy; he was gone away.

The misery, the hopelessness of his heart had urged him to do this. Struggle as he might, he could not root out his love for Ulrica, and so he determined to leave his home for a while.

It was the first time he had set aside what he considered his duty, but it was impossible to him to tell Sir John what George Messenger had been. He knew so well what her love was to Ulrica, and, were the marriage to

be broken off, he dared not think about her.

Those were curious days for Ulrica at Dunworthy Castle, radiantly

happy at one moment, pained and wounded the next.

Connie still lingered, though Chattie and her mother had gone home long ago.

She had one determination in her heart; that was, to yet wrest Sir John

from Ulrica's side.

Though things did not look very hopeful, she did not despair.

One afternoon, Ulrica, obeying a sign from her lover, went to get a wrap and hat, and go forth into the grounds for a stroll.

She met Connie Wren on the staircase.

"How strong you must be, Miss Messenger, really!" exclaimed Miss Wren, languidly; "you go out in all weathers!"

"Yes, I am strong," answered Ulrica, brightly.

She always tried not to see Connie's disagreeable ways.

"Oh, ah, yes," drawled Connie. "Our family are so delicate!"

"I have no family to boast of," laughed Ulrica, "which is a good thing, I think!"

Connie shrugged her shoulders and went on her way, while Ulrica ran quickly down to her lover.

She put on her brightest smiles for him, and he drew her hand through s arm with a tender touch.

"Ulrica, darling, I have asked you to come out with me this afternoon for one purpose; can you guess what it is? he said, after a while.

"No," whispered Ulrica, softly, though her face grew rosy.

"Try," urged Sir John, mischievously, bending to look into her eyes.

She shook her head in gentle confusion.

"Well, this is it."
They had walked to their favorite corner by now, and Sir John made a comfortable seat for Ulrica, and stood against a tree looking down at her.

"I want my darling to promise me something," he said, tenderly.

"Anything," cried Ulrica, looking up—"that is, anything I can, Jack."
"I safely assure you you can perform this promise on your own account." He changed his tone suddenly. "My darling—my own, I want you all to myself. I want you for my wife, my treasure; promise me, Ulrica, that our marriage shall be before Christmas."
"So soon!" she said in low startled tones.

"So soon!" she said in low startled tones.
"Are you afraid to come to me, dear?"

"Afraid!" she rose and put her arms around him. "Oh, Jack — Jack, my darling, the one thing on earth I love—I adore! Afraid of you! No—no! Listen—hold me tight, and I will tell you what I am frightened of. I am afraid my happiness is too great. I have a feeling here," and she struck her heart—"here, that it will end soon—that it will vanish from me like the beautiful dream it is, and then, Jack—my life will end!"

He clasped her close in his arms.

"My darling, don't talk like this!" he cried passionately. "You are tired to-day—nervous, worried, but believe me, my own, as far as one can say anything is certain in human life, our future happiness will be certain. Why, my dearest, what ails you? You are trembling like a leaf. Don't you know how much I love you? Don't you believe in me, trust in me, know me, Ulrica?"

"Aye, I do, indeed," she whispered faintly. "You are too good for me. Think, Jack, what you have done for me—given me sunshine—golden, glorious sunshine—that makes life worth living. It is not doubt of you; it is a fear—a whisper in the trees—a sensation that comes over me at night—that this will not last. Don't laugh at me, Jack; I cannot help

it."

"But I shall laugh at you, you simple, precious little dreamer! There, put down your head, and forget these foolish fears. God willing, Ulrica,

you shall have no shadows or fears henceforth, my darling!"

Even as he spoke Ulrica started in his arms. Her quick ear had caught the sound of approaching footsteps; and she drew herself apart from Sir John, as the dead leaves rustled clearer and a man came towards them. It was Horace Mott.

"Pardon my intrusion," he said pleasantly, lifting his hat; "but Lady Dunworthy begged me to come and find you, Dunworthy. It appears that some old family lawyer has come down."

"The very man I want to see," exclaimed Sir John. "Are you going back to the house, Mott? Yes? Then will you kindly tell my mother I

am hastening to her?"

"Certainly," smiled Mr. Mott, and he turned away at once.

Ulrica gave a shiver as he disappeared.

"How I dislike that man!" she murmured involuntarily.

"Well, now, I think I have grown to like him better. He is very pleasant. Do you know, Ulrica darling, I think it would gratify my mother if you were to speak to him a little more than you do now."

"Then I will, certainly," the girl answered; though her face looked pained. "But run away now, Jack; I am going down to the old well—

you will find me there."

"Isn't that rather dreary, all by your little self?" inquired Sir John.

Ulrica smiled and shook her head.

"I am not nervous, and your castle is a perfect fraud—it has no ghosts!"

He laughed, and bent and kissed her tenderly; then turned on his heel

and strode away.

Ulrica stood watching him till he was lost to sight; then, with a resolute shake of her shoulder, to dispel the sensation of coming evil that hung over

her, she began to walk slowly down the path to the old well.

She soon reached it, and seated herself on the low wall with a sigh of fatigue. Her thoughts flew to the many times she had come here with Chattie and Basil, and she smiled in fancy as she recalled their merry, quaint sayings; then her mind went back to the past, and lingered there.

Somehow she could not drag herself from the memory of those bygone

lonely years of wandering, and her face grew grave and sad.

As she sat thus, a slight noise caused her to look round, and, with a repressed scream, she started to her feet; for just before her stood a man she hoped never to see again—the priest, Father Lawrence.

She turned pale and her limbs trembled; one hand clung to the post of

the well; she could not speak. The priest broke the silence.

"You are surprised to find me here?" he said softly.

Still Ulrica could not speak. The presentiment of evil was closing

upon her again fast.

"It was my only way of speaking to you," went on Father Lawrence.
"I have been treated shamefully by Dr. Strong. Your dead father's wishes have been utterly neglected in every way; I have been spurned and reviled!"

"What do you want?" Ulrica forced her pale lips to utter.

"I have much to say to you."

Father Lawrence paused, and the girl, recovering a little from the shock, sank again onto the wall and put her hand to her heart.

"Why have you come to me like this?" she said in low bitter tones;

"it is cowardly—it is dishonorable!"

The priest's face darkened.

"The means will justify the end," he said smoothly. "What I have to tell you to-day will ——'

Ulrica rose hurriedly.

"There is nothing that you have to tell me to-day that I care to hear. Let me pass!"

Father Lawrence stood in her path.

"I must speak," he cried. "My duty urges me to it. Stay and hear me. You are about to marry?"

Ulrica lifted her hand to her throat and loosened the clasp of her cloak;

she felt choked.

"I decline to discuss my private affairs with any one," she said in low faint tones. Her courage was fleeting fast.

"It is on this subject I have come. If you will not listen to my religious teachings—if you reject my friendship, you must hear me now before you go farther. It is not of yourself you must think now, but of the man you would marry."

Ulrica started. Her feeling of oppression and fear had unsettled her; she felt now actual dread, and her face paled unconsciously.

Father Lawrence watched her keenly.

She looked a frail, fair creature to bear sorrow; yet sorrow was coming

to her. His gaze lingered on her. Then he said :

"Have you ever thought that disgrace and pain might follow on your martiage? Have you ever thought of the degradation you might bring on an honored name? Have you ever thought what you are?."

Ulrica put out one hand, and steadied herself against the wall. "What do you mean?" she whispered.

"You are the child of George Messenger, money-lender, usurer, extortioner. Every penny your father amassed was robbed from others. Do you think you are the wife Lady Dunworthy would choose for her son, or her son for himself, if they knew the truth?"

Ulrica stood rooted to the ground, her hand resting on the wall.

For one instant her heart seemed turned to stone. A deadly faintness stole over her.

This must mean separation, sorrow - worse than death.

The agony was too great; she turned swiftly on the priest.
"It is not true!" she cried passionately. "I will not believe it. You have hated me - planned against me from the beginning. This - this is part of your plot against me - I know it!"

She sank down onto the wall as she spoke, and buried her face in her

hands.

Father Lawrence looked at her for an instant.

"Will you never judge me right?" he said half sadly. "You tell me I The proof of my words can easily be yours. Ask Dr. Strong. You will believe him."

"Why did you come? Why not have left me in ignorance?" whispered

Ulrica faintly.

"Because I held it my duty; because I knew you were ignorant of the truth, and that you ought to know it before you went farther."

Ulrica sat quiet; she seemed stunned.

"Yes, you are right. I ought to have known this long ago. would have saved me from pain - terrible pain now!" she said after a while.

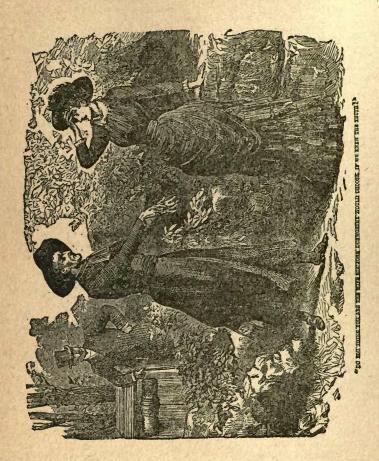
"I shall remain in the village until to-morrow;" Father Lawrence pulled his cloak round him; "it may be that you will wish to leave this neighborhood. Look on me as your friend, and trust me. My words have given you pain - well, as you grow in years you will learn that pain is the lot of every creature. I deemed it best you should know all."

He bent his head, and pushed through the bushes out of sight. Ulrica sat on, gazing after him, her mind almost a blank.

A cold laugh roused her, and looking round suddenly, she became aware of the presence of Horace Mott leaning against the well-post, a smile on his lips, a strange expression of triumph in his eyes.

"Mr. Mott," faltered the girl; "you - you-here!"

"Yes, I have been here all the time." Ulrica said nothing; her hands trembled.



"This news has upset you," he continued.

Ulrica gave a sigh and rose.

"I cannot speak to you now," she said agitatedly; " please let me pass." "You wish to join your lover?" he queried.

Her cheeks flushed crimson, then faded to deathly white.

"Let me pass!" was all she said. Mr. Mott made no effort to move.

"So," he sneered, "you think your lover will throw this news on one side; will link his honorable name with one that has been dragged through the mire of shame; or, perhaps, you do not mean to tell him—eh?"

The question was put so suddenly, that Ulrica found herself answer-

"Yes, yes - oh yes; I will tell him now; it will rest with him; but I have no fear, for he loves me - he loves me!"

The last words were whispered very low, but they reached the listener's

His brows met and his face flushed; he laughed again harshly.

"You are confident -- very sure. Well, put him to the test. all; but," he stopped for an instant, "you have yet to learn that all. Father Lawrence is wrong; there is more and worse to be told."

Ulrica met his dark, wicked eyes; her own were distraught with horror

and fear.

"Yes; go to your lover, and tell him all - tell him that your father was a thief—a usurer—an extortioner—and more, tell him that your father was a murderer; then see if he will make you his wife!"

He spoke slowly; as he finished, he put out his hand to help the girl,

for she reeled and almost fell.

"I-I don't want help. I am not going to faint," she said quietly, sinking back into her old position and brushing her hot eyes with her cold hands. "I can hear all you have to say — tell me everything."

Horace Mott was silent for an instant; his heart, throbbing with its passionate love, was swelled now by the admiration that came over him for

this girl, so young and weak, yet with the courage of a lion.

"Your father murdered his wife - your mother. I have known this all the while," he said; "but have held my tongue and waited. You have hated me—aye, I have not been blind. I could have torn you from your lover's arms before, but I waited. I have a score to settle with you both."

Ulrica took no notice of these words.

"You were going to tell me of my father's crime," she said, in cold, strained tones.

He laughed at her with flashing eyes, then shrugged his shoulders.

"You remember the day of your father's death?"

She made a sign of assent.

"You recall what occurred just before his seizure?"

"No, not clearly."

"You were standing by the chair; the crowd moving round you to and fro. I was there. A man passed you, and as your father's eyes rested on this man, he was attacked by a paroxysm of fear, culminating in the fit that eventually killed him."

He paused for an instant. Ulrica did not yet move. Some horrible

sensation was creeping over her, whispering that this was true.

"That man I know," Horace Mott said, still fixing her with his eager burning gaze; "he held this secret of your father's in his keeping, and George Messenger dreaded that through him justice would come. Once, as a child, you met this man. Do you remember, years ago, being taken to a dingy house in Paris by your father?"

"I have no recollection."

"No memory of a struggle - a fight?"

Ulrica shook her head.

" No -- none."

Horace Mott looked disturbed for a moment.

"Well, that matters not. If you require proof, Sir Geoffrey Denvil, your father's foe, will give it to you. Mr. Loudon will bear witness to the meeting between your father and Sir Geoffrey, and —— But you want nothing more; you know this is true."

Ulrica sat still in the same position.

"Is this all?" she asked, in the low strained tones so unlike her fresh young voice.

"No," breathed the man suddenly; "it is not all. Ulrica, I love you!"
Ulrica lifted her haggard young face; her trembling lips were curled with

contempt.

"You are a coward!" she said slowly; "I have always hated you, distrusted you. Now I hold you the most contemptible thing on this earth!"

He strode forward, and gripped her wrist.

"Unhand me!" she said swiftly, meeting his gaze fearlessly; "do you

forget that I am to be the wife of your friend?"

"You!" he laughed bitterly and recklessly—"you the wife of John Dunworthy! Listen. By all I hold sacred, I swear this shall never be—never! His lips shall cease from touching yours; his arms shall fold no longer round your beautiful form. You hate me, you loathe me, you despise me, do you, my pretty Ulrica? By Heaven, but you shall repent those words!"

His strong arms were wound round her. Struggle as she might, Ulrica

could not break herself from his hold.

Her heart beat almost to suffocation, her numbed lips refused to open, her eyes closed so that she could not see that dark, passionate face close to

hers. Horace Mott drew her to the brink of the well.

"Bend your beautiful head. Look down there," he said swiftly. "It is dark! It is steep! It means death! Yet I will assuredly send you down to that silent water rather than see you John Dunworthy's wife. No, Ulrica; you are mine henceforth. Listen! If you defy me and go to him, I give you warning the day that sees you his wife shall end in a night of widowhood. Yes, I will kill him!—shoot him like a dog—the dog he is! It is a bond between us, and shall be sealed thus."

Ulrica was conscious that he pressed her still more passionately to him, then his lips touched hers. All the horror, the shame, the misery of the moment came upon her then in its truth. She struggled again and again,

and gave one short despairing cry.

Horace Mott's quick ear caught the sound of hurrying footsteps.

With a muttered oath he released the girl, and pushed his way through the bushes, as Sir John Dunworthy ran down the path, and found his darling—his love—stretched in a dead faint at his feet.

"Let me go back to Bathurst - take me to Bathurst!" were the first

words Ulrica uttered as she recovered from her fainting-fit.

Sir John, wild with his distress, had picked up her insensible form and carried it with great difficulty up the path to the lawn.

There he met Horace Mott sauntering slowly to and fro reading a newspaper.

"Great Heaven, Dunworthy! what is the matter?" throwing away his

paper and hurrying forward.

"Ulrica has fainted," Sir John said in great agitation. "What can have happened? I was hurrying to her when I thought I heard her scream, and rushed down to find her lying on the ground by the old well."

"She must have fallen and hurt herself," observed Mr. Mott. "I will

go and send her maid."

" Please; thanks, awfully, Mott."

Mr. Mott was back almost directly, followed by Lady Dunworthy and one of the maids.

Mary, Ulrica's own little abigail, was gone to London for a holiday.

"Miss Messenger fainted? Dear me, how extraordinary?" exclaimed

Lady Dunworthy.

Sir John was too much occupied in gazing at his darling's white, still face to notice his mother, and in a very few minutes he was rejoiced to see the heavy lashes uplifted.

Horace Mott was close by, but not in sight; he was waiting to hear what Ulrica would say, but her only words were: "Take me back to Bathurst—take me back!"

Lady Dunworthy was exceedingly annoyed that Ulrica should wish to go home, and when Sir John hurried away to order the carriage, she said,

"Can you give us no explanation of this strange request, Miss Messenger?

It is a very extraordinary affair altogether, really!"

But Ulrica made no reply; she only sat still on the rustic garden-chair and gazed straight before her.

Horace Mott watched her carefully, and the maid handed her a smellingbottle, with great sympathy for Sir John's "pretty young lady."

When her son came fleeting back, Lady Dunworthy sailed to meet him. "I have the right to ask what has happened, John?"

"You know as much as I do," he replied, tersely. "I was foolish enough to leave Ulrica down by the old well alone, and something must have frightened her."

Lady Dunworthy shrugged her shoulders.

"Why is it, I wonder, that persons of her class always faint or go into hysterics?" she said, with a sneer.

But Sir John was gone, and very tenderly was assisting his love to rise. He drove her back himself to Bathurst, glancing ever and anon anxiously at her white face.

As they reached Guy's home he bent and whispered:

"Will my darling tell me now what happened?" Ulrica looked up at him for one instant, then put her hand in one of his and carried it to her lips.

. "I was wrong, Jack," she said in such strained husky tones; "your

-your castle has ghosts — after all."
"And you were frightened, my own?" Yes," she answered; "I was frightened - frightened almost to death." Sir John gave a sigh of relief; he clasped her small cold hand firmly.

"You shall tell me all about it to-morrow, my own darling. I was a fool to let you go there alone."

They reached Bathurst Hall, and he lifted her down carefully.

Mrs. Strong was shocked at the girl's white face.

"Ulrica has had a fright and fainted," explained Sir John, "and she

would come back to you."

"My daughter!" murmured Mrs. Strong, as she enfolded the girl in a warm embrace. "Now I recommend quiet and rest. Leave her to me, John; she will be herself to-morrow."

"To-morrow," murmured Ulrica to herself, and shuddered; "to-mor-

row - alas!"

Mrs. Strong left the lovers alone for an instant while she went to give

orders about Ulrica's room.

"My darling, my poor white love!" said Sir John, drawing Ulrica to

She rested against him silently.

"It is for the last time," she said in her heart. "Oh, God, for the last

"Promise me to rest, my precious one. I will ride over to-morrow, or

would you like a day all to yourself?"

Ulrica's throat was choking; she longed to throw her arms round him, and entreat him to keep her, always to cling to her, but the shame, the awful horror that had come upon her, stayed her.

She must part from him now; she must never see him again.

"Don't—don't come to-morrow," she said faintly. "Jack, forgive me; I am——"

"Forgive you, dear. Why, it is you who should forgive me for letting you go off down to such gloomy places all alone. Now, my darling, listen. Something has upset you; you shall have a nice, quiet day all to yourself to-morrow, and then when you are better you shall tell me all about it. Does that please my own?"

"Oh, you are too good to me - too good!"

There was such a wail in her voice that Sir John's face looked pained. "Too good to you, my love, my life!" he murmured, pressing her to him. "Now I must go. Au revoir, my darling."

"Good-bye!" Ulrica's pale lips formed, but could not utter the word.

Mrs. Strong came back, and the lovers parted.

"Take care of her," whispered Sir John.

Mrs. Strong nodded; then the young man slowly departed.

The older woman led Ulrica up to her bedroom, and after a few soothing words left her alone - alone!

#### CHAPTER XII.

ONNIE WREN heard of Ulrica's strange illness with inward delight, which rose exceedingly when she discovered Sir John's uneasiness and distress.

Lady Dunworthy expressed herself openly about her son's fiancée, and confided to Connie that there was no doubt Ulrica had fainted on purpose.

Sir John took no notice of their looks and words. Doubt of his fair

darling never darkened his mind.

Horace Mott watched him as he mounted his horse the next morning and rode away.

"He is going to her," he thought. "What will follow? I must

So equipping himself hastily, he went round to the stables and mounted

a horse also.

Sir John had walked, not cantered away, and to Horace Mott's astonishment, he suddenly turned round and returned.

"I have just remembered that the hounds meet at Pleydell Common to-day," explained Sir John. "Will you come?"

Horace Mott shook his head.

"I was just going to ride to the village; I want to telegraph to town."

The two men separated with a mutual nod.

Connie spent a long, dull day; she yawned all the morning, and then invented a bad headache for the afternoon to escape Lady Dunworthy's society, which bored her exceedingly.

Once in her room, she gave herself up to a good hour with her wardrobe

and her maid.

"I would give much to know what ails her," she thought as she stood before her mirror and made her toilet for the evening. She was thinking of Ulrica. "There is some mystery. Oh, if only she would turn out to be an adventuress. But there's no such luck. Sir John looks bothered,. anyway, and her fainting at the old well seems very queer. I wonder why Horace Mott always smiles so disagreeably when he glances at me? I hate

Her dress adjusted, she gazed at herself with satisfaction, and determined to make one good struggle more before she resigned Sir John to Ulrica

forever.

Sir John was just striding through the hall as she swept down the stairs. "Ah, Miss Wren, you're a perfect vision of loveliness! Beware how you approach me; I am covered with mud, as you perceive."

"Have you had a good day?" asked Connie, lifting her eyes with her

most effective glance.

"Splendid—simply A 1! Never had a better. You should have been there."

"Yes; I should have enjoyed it," she said plaintively; "but you did not

ask me."

"How remiss of me! Pray forgive me; and now I must hurry up, or I shall be late for dinner."

"You are not going out again?"

" No."

Connie smiled.

"I am so glad," she said sweetly, "for we are quite alone. Mr. Mott left us to-day; he was summoned to town, he said."

"Mott gone!" repeated Sir John in surprise. "That must be something

new; he did not speak of it this morning. I wonder what is up."
"Perhaps Miss Messenger can tell you," observed Connie very sweetly and innocently, "for I noticed, as we joined them the other day, they both looked distressed. I fancy he must have been confiding some trouble to her; at any rate he follows her about like a shadow."

"I will ask Ulrica about it," answered Sir John, upon whom this remark

fell very flat indeed.

He waved his hand and ran up to his room whistling merrily. His man was busy with his clothes as he entered. He handed a note to his master. "This has just come for you, sir."

Sir John took it eagerly. It was in Ulrica's handwriting.

"You can go, Gryce," he said kindly. "I shall not want you."

The man withdrew, and Sir John waited till he was gone; then, with a flush of happiness, pressed the unconscious paper to his lips. Ulrica's letters always delighted her lover. They were so sweet and true; she did not say much, but the depth—the sincerity of her nature was visible in every line, speaking fearlessly how greatly she loved.

He looked at it for a second, then tore open the envelope with a smile

of pleased anticipation.

A small object rolled from the paper and dropped to the floor. He picked it up; it was a ring—the ring he had given her. He turned to the letter in surprise; the smile died away as he read the first line. There was no beginning, no term of endearment; it was clearly, concisely, curtly written:

"When you receive this, I shall have left Bathurst Hall."

Sir John's hand dropped. What could this mean?

A cold sensation stole over his heart. He lifted the letter and forced

himself to read on:

"Circumstances have occurred to-day that must separate us forever. I can never see you again — never be your wife. If I could ease your heart of the pain these words must bring, I would do it if it cost me my life; but I am powerless. Do not try to find me. I cannot —I must not —I dare not see you. May God bless you and bring you every earthly happiness! There is nothing too good for you.

ULRICA MESSENGER."

The letter dropped from his fingers; he staggered to a chair.

At first his brain was stunned, his thoughts would not come; then the

full weight of the blow struck home to him.

Something terrible had happened! Ulrica was gone—his love, his light, his very life gone! What could it mean! He bent his head into his hands, and tried to think. What could come that should separate them forever? Who had the right to part them?

He rose and strode to the window in his agitation.

Gone! Where—to whom? Never see her again. Oh, that was too bitter—too cruel!

He picked up the letter once more. Nothing explained, no word of

farewell, no word of tenderness.

His heart was suddenly assailed by doubt — by jealousy. Ulrica had deceived him; she had never loved him!

He trod the paper under his foot, and strode up and down in a tempest

of pain, fear, perplexity.

It lasted only a moment; then his determination was taken. He opened his door.

"Gryce!"

"Yes, Sir John."

"Send round to the stables and tell them to saddle the mare Stella at once."

"Yes, Sir John."

He would ride over without delay; she might not yet have gone; there was not a moment to lose. In his excitement he trembled like a woman. His fatigue was forgotten; he thrilled to be doing, to end this terrible suspense. Never in his whole easy life had he suffered such grief as now. It crushed his heart and courage by its greatness; it stunned him by its swiftness.

Meanwhile Connie had watched him run up-stairs, with a triumphant beat in her selfish heart. Now was her opportunity; it would be odd if she could not make some good use of it. She turned to the drawingroom, which, despite its size and grandeur, Lady Dunworthy always used, no matter how small her party.

She looked up as Connie entered.

"Ah, my dear," she said, graciously, "and are you better? I hope the headache is quite gone."

"Yes, thank you, dear Lady Dunworthy; you are always so kind. I

feel quite well now."

Connic drew up a low chair to the fire.

"You overwork yourself," was the elder woman's affectionate reproof.

Connie shook her head.

"Indeed, no. I like to help you," she answered sweetly.

"You are a good girl, Connie," sighed Lady Dunworthy, gazing at the fire gloomily. "Has John come in, do you think?"

"Yes; I met him just this instant. He will be here to dinner to-night."

Lady Dunworthy heaved another sigh.

"For a wonder! that miserable infatuation - ah, how I wish it would

"But have you no influence with Sir John?" demanded Connie, mali-ciously innocent. She knew right well the workings of the whole affair why Lady Dunworthy brought herself to receive Ulrica, and why Sir John had succeeded so easily.

Lady Dunworthy's cheeks colored faintly.

"My dear child, what influence should I have against a designing intrignante, such as that girl is?" she asked in reply.

Connie was silent, and at this instant, much to Lady Dunworthy's relief,

dinner was announced.

"We will be unorthodox, and not wait for John," she said, as she rose

and sailed to the door.

As they were crossing the hall, Sir John ran hurriedly down the stairs; he wore his hunting-coat; his hat was pressed over his brows. Connie caught a glimpse of his face; it was white, drawn, and terribly agitated.

"John!" exclaimed Lady Dunworthy.

"I am not coming to dinner, mother," he replied curtly, adding to the

man-servant: "Has Gryce sent round the mare?"

"Yes, Sir John."

"Going out again?" said his mother, her anger betraying itself in her

"To Bathurst, I suppose?"

"Yes, mother, to Bathurst," was his answer, given coldly and shortly; then he added with his usual courtesy: "But do not let me keep you—it is not pleasant out here."

"I had hoped you would have stayed with us to-night," observed Lady Dunworthy, with a heavy frown; "we are quite alone—Horace Mott left

us to-day."

"I am sorry, mother, but it is quite impossible"

Lady Dunworthy turned away, and Connie followed her, biting her lip with vexation. Sir John pressed his hat on, took his hunting-crop, mounted the mare, and rode away in the darkness, mad with the agony of his misery.

Again and again the thought, the hope would come that it was not true

- that Ulrica was jesting.

Then the hope died as the memory of yesterday returned; her strange

fainting-fit, her illness. Yes, some great, some awful thing had come upon the brightness of their love, and shadowed it for a time.

Heedless of the darkness and the falling rain, he rode at full speed. The

action seemed to relieve him, to work off some of the suspense.

He passed along the deserted lanes, which so often had been peopled of late with his happy fancies and glowing hopes, where so often he had sauntered with Ulrica, secure in their solitude, while they weaved the golden fetters of their love's young dream.

He pushed these thoughts from him; his whole being clamored to know

the truth, learn the worst.

His voice, hoarse with agitation, summoned the lodge-keeper in haste to the gate; he galloped up the avenue regardless of the man's surprised looks, and in another moment he was at the Hall, and off his horse.

The butler stared with astonishment at his mud-bespattered form and

white face.

"Send some one to hold my horse, Stevens," said Sir John briefly.

He stood in the doorway, the reins still in his hand. A portmanteau and rug lay just inside. At the sight his heart leaped. They must be hers. He was in time.

"I will hold it, sir, if you are in a hurry."

Sir John nodded his head.

"Where is -," he began huskily, when a form stood beside him.

"Why, Dunworthy!"

"Strong!"

The two men clasped hands.

"I have this very instant arrived," said Guy, taking in that something was wrong at a glance; "and \_\_\_\_ "

"Where is Ulrica?" asked the other hoarsely.

Guy stared at him.

"Ulrica? Why, in her room, I should say. I have not seen her; but

"Then - then she is gone."

And Sir John staggered against the wall.

Guy read the curiosity in Stevens' face. He grasped Sir John by the shoulder, and forced him rather than assisted him into his study.

"Now speak," he said sternly. "What do you mean?"

Sir John made no reply. He pulled off his wet glove, and with trembling fingers drew forth Ulrica's letter; then, throwing it onto the table, sank into a chair, and buried his face in his hands. Guy picked up the letter. He read it once—a second, a third time—

before he seemed to grasp the full meaning.

He was so strangely quiet that Sir John lifted his head, and the expression on the other's face was the finishing-touch to all.

"For God's sake, Strong, tell me all! What - what does it mean?" "I cannot tell—I don't know," Guy replied, the words dropping from between his lips with difficulty.

"You see, she says she will leave Bathurst forever. She may not be gone. It may be only a joke—a cruel one—but still a joke."

At the agony in his voice, Guy woke from his mental prostration. He put his hand on Sir John's shoulder.

"Dunworthy, don't give way. There is something strange about this I cannot understand. I will ring and ask for - for Ulrica."

He pulled the bell as he spoke, and they waited in silence.

Stevens answered the summons.

"I've 'ad Sir John's mare took round to the stables, sir; she was a little blown," he said as he entered.

"Quite right, Stevens. Send Miss Messenger's maid to me."

"Do you mean Mary, sir?"

"She've gone away for her holiday, sir. She went a week vesterday." Guy hesitated for an instant.

"Who has been attending Miss Messenger?" he asked.

"Bruce, sir."

"Send her to me; and, Stevens, be careful your mistress is not roused. She is asleep now, and must sleep on."

The butler withdrew, and Guy walked up and down in silence till the

maid appeared.

Sir John was seated by the table, leaning his head on his hand.

"Ah, Bruce," said Dr. Strong, kindly, "has Miss Messenger returned?" He put the question easily, though certain in his heart that Ulrica was gone; but all scandal must be prevented as far as possible.

"No, sir; she went out quite early this afternoon. It is time she was

home. I hope there is nothing the matter, sir?"
"Oh, no." Guy forced himself to speak lightly. "Miss Messenger had to go to London. She must have been detained by her friends."

"Oh, I wish she had told me, sir. I am sure mistress would have wished

me to go with Miss Ulrica."

"Miss Ulrica knew your mistress was ill to-day, and would need you."

The door shut on the maid.

Guy turned to Sir John. "You must wake up, Dunworthy; something is wrong. You must come with me."

"Where to?" " London."

"But how do you know she is there?" "I don't know. I conjecture it. Ah, it is very simple. Where would a soul, worn and worried as Ulrica must be, seek for oblivion, save in a great city like London? Come, we will go first to Bathurst, and make inquiries."

In another moment they were seated in Guy's dog-cart, dashing through

the wet muddy lanes to Bathurst town.

The shops were closed, the streets deserted.

Bathurst was an early place; it retired at ten o'clock.

The hour was just chiming as they drove into the station-yard. Sir John sprang from his seat almost before the cart stopped.

He was rushing in, but Guy was to quick for him. "Dunworthy," he said hurriedly, "I must speak!"

He called one of the porters, then walked leisurely in through the station-door, Sir John following, white and wan.

"Oh, Barnes," said Guy to the station-master, as they entered the booking-office, "did I leave my small portmanteau behind me this evening?"

The man put down his newspaper at once.

"Your small portmanteau, Dr. Strong? I have not seen one, but I will send and inquire. Glad to see you home again, sir! I hope you are

" Quite well, thank you," returned Guy.

"You said a small portmanteau, didn't you, sir? Here, Bill, go and look for a small-brown, sir?-yes, brown portmanteau belonging to Dr. Strong. I hope he'll find it, sir, but I don't remember it."

"Perhaps I left it in town, after all. It is a nuisance, but I wanted to

make inquiries."

Sir John turned a mute, eager glance on him.

Guy walked up and down for two minutes, then he approached his

"Ulrica had a raw day for her travel. Oh, by the way, Barnes, did

Miss Messenger catch the four express this afternoon?"

"Miss Messenger!" repeated the man. "Let me see! Oh, yes, sir; I remember she did. I put her in a carriage myself."

Sir John's right hand grasped the side of a door.
"I hope you—you made her comfortable, Barnes," he said in low, husky tones.

"Oh, yes, Sir John, I did. I wanted to get her a foot-warmer, but she

would not have it. She went in a carriage all alone."

"Ah, it's a tedious journey by one's self," observed Guy, watching Sir

John's pale face intently.

"Yes, sir, and cold, sir. Well, there was one or two people I could have put in the carriage, sir; but she asked to be alone. There was Mrs. Godwin and her eldest daughter, and the gentleman from the castle, Sir John -Mr. Mott, I think you calls him. Have you found it, Bill? No? Well, that's odd. I'll hunt through myself, if you will wait, sir."

"It is no matter, Barnes," Guy cried hurriedly.

But the man had turned away.

As he vanished in the darkness of the platform Sir John grasped Guy's

His face now was ghastly white and fixed, his breath came thick and fast. Like a flash of lightning the memory of yesterday crossed his mind.

Ulrica's strange illness, her mysterious cruel letter, and the poisoned

malicious words spoken by Connie.

"You need not inquire further," he said calmly, his voice sounding strained and harsh. "I know the meaning of all; she - she has gone with Mott!"

### CHAPTER XIII.

ONDON at night. Thick rain was falling, in a steady determined I fashion, a muggy close fog crept through every crevice, and added to the discomfort of the wet.

At Euston Station the trains were starting and arriving briskly; crowds of passengers hurried to and fro, luggage was wheeled by, papers were bought, parting or welcoming kisses exchanged.

All was bustle and confusion; inside the station it was warm and comfortable; in the waiting-rooms blazed huge fires; the gas was lit every-

A girl stood motionless by the side of one of the closed bookstalls. She wore a thick, heavy cloak, and a black veil drawn close over her face; she had no luggage and was quite alone.

The sight of this graceful figure standing so quietly provoked few glances; everybody was too busy with their own concerns to trouble their heads about her.

It was Ulrica.

She was dazed and worn out, but her brain was working swiftly.

She had left Bathurst, but where to go next?

At first a thought of seeking out her maid Mary, and obtaining shelter with her for a day, had come — but she dismissed it quickly.

By this means her whereabouts would soon be discovered, and she would be compelled to go through the very thing she dreaded most — an interview with Sir John, or, even worse than that, one with Horace Mott.

Her heart grew sick at the thought; then, as she felt her limbs tremble

beneath her, she thought of her old friend Sam.

Surely she could turn to him in this the hour of her need? He had been so staunch, so true. She determined to do so, and asking her way of a passing porter, went to the telegraph office outside the station.

Here she pondered, and dispatched a telegram to Sam in Paris, saying she would write that night full particulars from "little Rica," using that name in case Sir John or any one should trace her having sent to Sam.

This done, she made her way up to a burly-looking policeman. "Please will you tell me of a respectable hotel—it must be cheap?"

she asked hurriedly.

The man looked at her; he could not see her face.

"Are you alone?" he said gruffly.

"Yes.

"Well, there's a place just around the corner; it belongs to a cousin of my missis; you can go there. Tell 'em I sent you - X 42."

Ulrica thanked the man, and offered him a shilling from her slender store.

But he shook his head.

"No-no; I don't want nothink; you'll find plenty to do with your Round the corner. Oh, p'raps you don't know your way. Jim! Here, take this lady to The Three Crowns - sharp!"

"Right ye are, guv'nor. This way, lady."

Ulrica thanked the man again, and followed the little ragged urchin,

unconscious of the fact that she in turn was being followed.

The Three Crowns turned out to be a small, smart-looking public-house. Ulrica recoiled at first; she could not enter those swinging glass-doors, from behind which came the sound of loud voices singing a music-hall ditty, she said to herself; but her cicerone had no intention of taking her there. He pushed open a door, marked "Private Bar," and held it for Ulrica to pass through.

The room was dimly lighted, and smelt strongly of tobacco. It was

Ulrica had not tasted food since morning, and then not much. Her misery had been and was still so great, all appetite was gone, but she felt strangely weak.

"Mrs. Cogger - Mrs. Cog-g-er!" shouted the small boy shrilly, as Ulrica

sank onto one of the leather seats beside the table.

"Well, now, what's up?" demanded a loud voice, and a woman entered the room. She was very fat and very smart; one mass of beads and cherry ribbons.

"Dan's sent a lady - wants somethink," explained the boy.

Mrs. Cogger curtseyed to Ulrica, who had risen.

"I want a bedroom, please," faltered the girl, "and something to eat."

Mrs. Cogger eyed her carefully.

"Yes," she said slowly; "any luggage, miss?"

Ulrica shook her head.

"Ahem!" Mrs. Cogger coughed; "it is - our custom to-"

"To be paid in advance," finished Ulrica. "Certainly; how much must I give you?"

The landlady looked a little confused. "Shall you stay long, miss?" she asked.

"For three days, at least."

"Then give me a sovereign in advance, and I'll make you as comfortable as I can. This way, miss."

Ulrica gave the boy a shilling, and then toiled up the narrow staircase

after Mrs. Cogger's portly form.

The bedroom was small, scantily furnished, but clean.

Ulrica sank exhausted into a chair, and, after ordering something to eat, she begged for writing-paper, and sat down to ask Sam for help and advice.

She did not touch on the subject of her father's crime. She took it for granted Sam would know what she meant; she merely told him her connection with her friends was severed, she was very wretched, and would he help her to earn her living in some way?

After swallowing a few mouthfuls she told the landladly she was going to

post her letter, and made her way to the office outside the station.

She was soon there and back, and still the figure followed her stealthily. It was a man in a dark ulster, with a felt hat pulled low over his brows. He watched her enter the "private bar" again, then nodded and strolled

way.

"Good! She will stay there for to-night. Poor, ignorant plotter—to think to escape me! I thought she would face her lover and tell him all. Perhaps this is only a blind. I must watch and be careful."

The dark, miserable night passed.

Ulrica had tossed and turned on her hard bed, but at last had sunk into a troubled sleep. She could not hear from Sam for two days yet, and until then she determined to keep close in her hiding-place.

The next morning broke wet and cheerless. Mrs. Cogger prepared a substantial meal, and carried it into a small room behind the private bar.

Here Ulrica sat shivering over a smoky fire. Breakfast she could eat none. She was too ill—sick with anxiety till Sam's letter came.

Outside in the bar several men were drinking and talking, among them a clean-shaven groomlike-looking man. Mrs. Cogger was very busy serving them, and chatting, and by-and-by a woman came in, with whom she shook hands.

"Well, I don't mind if I do," said this woman, when invited to have something comforting, "for it's blessed cold outside. Dan said he'd sent

you a lady-customer last night, Jane."

"Yes, it was all right; she came, and is here now."

The groom was talking with the rest, but he had one ear on the woman.

"Going to stay here?" demanded the new-comer.

"Dunno—somethink queer about her. Oh, she's respectable! I don't mean that. Expects she'll stay for three days—anyhow, she's paid for it. Seems as if she were troubled like. I think she's waiting for a letter from somewheres."

The groom leisurely finished his glass, then, with a good-morning all round, sauntered out of the bar.

Once outside, he gave a sharp look round, then started down the street

and turned a corner. Here he ran against a man waiting.

"I've found out all, sir. She's agoing to stay for another day or two; is expecting a letter, or something of the sort.

"Good," said Horace Mott; "there's your money. Keep your eyes open all to-day, and bring me news at once if anything happens."

The miserable morning dragged on. Ulrica tried to read, but she was

too ill to do anything but rest on her hard bed.

Mrs. Cogger came up now and then to see her, and was much concerned at her want of appetite.

"You'll die — that's what it is," she said, as she carried the supper down at night untasted.

The next morning Ulrica sought the landlady, and feverishly begged for

"Give me anything to do—anything! I don't care what it is," she pleaded. In her heart she said, "If I don't do something, I shall go mad!" The memory of what she had gone through, and the shame and misery,

the hopelessness of her position, were too terrible.

Mrs. Cogger paused to think.

"I ain't got nothing for you to do," she said; "but," then she added, "can you sew?"

"Yes, yes," cried the girl, a flush creeping over her pale lovely face;

"but I — I can't go out. I want to work here."

"I'll manage it. Miss Ward across the way is a dressmaker. She was only asking me this morning for some one to do the odd jobs, stitch on the buttons, and such like."

"Oh, if you will speak to her, I shall be grateful!"
"You'll get eighteen pence a day," said Mrs. Cogger, and disappeared. The result of her speaking was that Ulrica found her hands busy all the day sewing brass buttons onto a plaid dress, finishing off the seams and all the bands necessary. It was new and not pretty work, but it kept her brain from going, and let her feverish anxiety loose from her burning heart.

"A letter, miss."

Ulrica dropped her work. It was the eve of the fourth day. It was like a year - more, a century of years - since that morning at the old well.

Ulrica looked at the envelope. It was in an unknown hand, addressed to "Miss Barker" (the name she had chosen). For some time past Sam had been unable to write himself, so this did not alarm her. A cheque slipped from the letter as she unfolded it, but it lay unheeded on her knees.

She was gazing at the lines, grasping the meaning slowly.

They ran as follows:

Paris, Oct. 30, 188-"MADAM: - I am instructed by my client, Mrs. Samuel Loudon, to inform you of

the death of her husband on the —— ult., at the same time to forward you the enclosed draft on Coutts' Bank for £50. Mrs. Loudon also begs me to say that she is grieved to hear of your misfortune and trusts the dishonor you speak of does not affect you individually. She will be unable to offer you any further assistance, and begs that you will not apply to her again. Kindly send an acknowledgement of the cheque. I am, madam, faithfully yours, "EDWARD LOWE."

The letter fluttered to the ground. Sam dead! It was impossible—it was horrible!

To think of his cheery face stiff in death, his warm-toned voice silent forever — it was more than she could understand, it was awful! She let her

hands sink to her knees, and her head fall onto her breast.

She was indeed forlorn — indeed alone. Where were her tears? Why would they not come and break the band that was stealing round her throat and heart? Was she turned to stone?

She hardly knew, she scarcely realized that she lived; she seemed numbed

with her pain and grief.

The door opening roused her.

Mrs. Cogger came in a little breathless from toiling up the stairs, and

she sank into a chair.

"Come, my dear, this won't do, you know," she said as soon as she could speak; "if you don't eat, I shall have you ill in my house, and I can't abide illness.

Ulrica looked at her in a dazed way.

"I shall go away to-morrow," she said, speaking almost mechanically.

Mrs. Cogger gave her a swift, sharp look.
"Yes, of course," she said. "Now, I've come up to ask you just to trot down with me, and 'ave a bit of supper with me and my good man."

"You are very good," said Ulrica, still mechanically.

"You ain't eat nothink for nearly two days, and you must have somethink."

Mrs. Cogger rose, her sharp eyes had caught sight of the cheque on the

"Don't leave your money kicking about like that," she remonstrated.

Ulrica stooped and picked up both the letter and cheque.

"Now, you'll come, won't you?" urged Mrs. Cogger good-naturedly. Ulrica still seemed stunned and bewildered, but she was conscious that a terrible future lay before her; she must not get ill, deserted as she

"Yes," she said faintly; "I will come in a minute."

Mrs. Cogger nodded, turned on her heel, and went laboriously down the

stairs again.

Ulrica, left alone, sat silent for a moment; then, drawing her writing materials towards her, addressed an envelope to Mrs. Loudon, and, putting the cheque back, closed it and slipped it into her pocket.

The insulting letter had wounded her at first, but now she dismissed Mrs. Loudon from her distraught mind; she had need of all her strength

and courage to face her life henceforth.

She made her way slowly in the little parlor behind the bar, and was welcomed loudly by Mrs. Cogger and her husband.

"Now, sit ye down, my dear," commanded the landlady, turning round

from the fire, "and make yourself at home." Ulrica sank into a chair, and Mr. Cogger immediately proffered her a cup of steaming coffee.

The girl tried to smile her thanks, but in vain; she could only murmur

a few words.

The meal was humble but plentiful, and Mrs. Cogger hospitably pushed everything towards her guest.

Ulrica forced herself to eat, and the food did her good.

She listened to the gossip of the buxom landlady and her spouse as in a dream, and was grateful that they left her in peace.

At last, as the meal ended, she rose to go.

"Thank you for all your kindness to me," she said in low tones. can never repay you."

"I don't want payment," exclaimed Mrs. Cogger; then, breaking off as the barmaid entered the room: "Now, Jane, what is it?"

"A gentleman, ma'am, says he must see you."

Ulrica turned slowly and faced the door; some terrible fear was on

There, standing calm and quiet, with a smile on his mouth and gleam in

his eye, was Horace Mott.

She sank slowly into her chair, dimly conscious of his hand on her shoulder, dimly hearing his voice ring out:

"I must apologize. I have been looking everywhere for this lady. She

is my wife!"

## CHAPTER XIV.

"YOUR wife!" exclaimed Mrs. Cogger. "Lor', sir; what a surprise! Miss—that is to say, Mrs. Barker never said as she was married.

Horace Mott smiled again, and the grip of his hand on that slender

shoulder grew firmer.

"I don't think we need disguise anything from you, madam," he said pleasantly. "The fact is, my little wife and I disagreed a few days ago. The fault was mine. I own it, and I have come to beg her forgiveness and take her home."

Ulrica seemed to wake from her semi-trance; she staggered to her feet. "No, no; not with you—not——" she gasped, but the words died away in a moan, and her head sank forward.

Horace Mott drew her unconscious form close to his heart.

At the contact his eyes flashed and his pulses thrilled, but his voice was perfectly calm as he spoke to the astonished Mrs. Cogger and her husband.

"She has fainted, poor darling! How ill she looks! I can never forgive myself. I could have cut out my tongue for the angry words I said; but I never thought she would leave me. Ah, madam, you have a woman's true heart; you can sympathize with us. You understand?"

"I do -I do," nodded Mrs. Cogger; and she gave a deep sigh. "Me and my husband had 'eaps of squabbles, but that was long ago. We made it all up again, and so will she, poor young lady. She looked such a mite of a girl, I should never have imagined she was married."

Horace Mott gazed at Ulrica's pale, lovely face pressed against his

coat.

He laid her gently on the hard sofa, and took up her small left hand.

He shook his head sorrowfully.

"Her ring — the badge of our love!" he said, as if to himself — "you threw it off, my darling, in your sorrow, but I found it, and once more it shall be put on its resting-place."

There was not a spark of life in the still girlish figure, a flicker of re-

turning consciousness on her face.

He felt his spirits rise.

This was unlooked-for good luck.

He had expected great difficulty, perhaps defeat, and here was Ulrica herself lending him the very aid he required.

"She makes no sign," he said, as both Mrs. Cogger and the maid bent over her. "Well, perhaps it is better. I will carry her home, and let her wake to see the things that I scattered about her in our new first happiness."

He knelt beside her, and drew her once more into his arms.

"Lor', ma'am, ain't he fond aud good?" whispered the maid in Mrs.

Cogger's ear.

The devotion of the pretended husband had worked its way with both women, and, as for Mr. Cogger, he had lurched sheepishly out of the room. Fainting ladies were not much in his way.

"Have you fur to take her?" inquired the buxom landlady.

Horace Mott shook his head.

"We live in the country," he said, caressing Ulrica's cold hand with his lips; "but I shall take her to my London house. My carriage is at the door. Poor, pretty darling! Did she think she could be lost from me? I traced her easily. And now, if you bring me her luggage, if she has any—her cloak and things—I will carry her away with me."

"But is it safe? Won't she be ill? Better let her wait till she comes round," Mrs. Cogger said as the barmaid ran up-stairs at his bidding.

He shook his head.

"Unfortunately I have seen her in these faints before. She is delicate; her nerves have been unstrung. She may remain unconscious for some time. I will send for her doctor as soon as we arrive home."

The maid brought down the cloak, hat, and veil, and a few odds-and-

ends she had found lying about.

"There, madam, that is for your trouble and kindness." Mott put down a five-pound note. "And that is my address, should you want me."

He gave her a fictitious name, both of himself and of the locality; then, throwing the cloak over Ulrica, he lifted her easily in his arms, and with the aid of the two women, who were profuse in their thanks—for he had slipped a sovereign into the maid's hand too—carried his precious burden to the carriage waiting.

He placed Ulrica in one corner, sprang in himself, uttered the magical

word "Home," and was whirled away.

"Ah, any one can see that he's a real gentleman," observed Mrs. Cogger triumphantly, holding up the bank-note to her husband's eyes.

Mr. Cogger smoked in silence for a few minutes; his ruddy face looked

very solemn.

"That's a lot of pay for little work, Liza, ain't it?" he asked. "Suppose she ain't his wife? The poor young thing didn't have no chance to speak, and her face was kind of horror-stricken when she see him first. I 'ope it's all right."

Mrs. Cogger sat down suddenly.

"Lor', Jim, suppose it isn't, and she so nice and pleasant-spoken, too!" The good woman's countenance paled a little suddenly. "That 'ud be awful;" then her face lightened. "But what a fool I am. See, he's left his haddress, so it must be all right. Look for yourself!"

Mr. Cogger read the card, and then nodded his head.

"Well, I suppose it is; but I didn't kind o' like the looks of him quite,

Liza, and that's the truth."

On rolled the swift wheels of the carriage; the shop-lights flashing in at the windows shone on the girl's white face, and showed the watcher that

the motion of the carriage was recalling life to the pallid lips and heavy eye-lids.

Ulrica moved faintly. She was conscious of a beating and thumping in

in her ears, and the whirr of incessant turmoil around her.

A maze of disturbed color floated before her eyes; at one time myriads of stars seemed glittering in the gloom; then all was dark - a heavy black darkness that woke a faint indefinable thrill of fear in her slowly throbbing heart.

Horace Mott gazed at her eagerly. She was very tardy in coming to

herself, for which he was thankful.

He uttered curses at the horses for their slowness, yet their speed was as fast as could be expected in a crowded thoroughfare.

At last he drew his breath. They were near their destination. The car-

riage stopped in a quiet spot, and he leaped out.

Vague terrors filled Ulrica's brain; she was dimly conscious of being lifted from some dark place, carried swiftly, it seemed, up-stairs, and then laid gently on some soft cushions in a room filled with delicious, faint fragrance, and lit by tender, rose-hued lights.

She struggled to a sitting position. The vague dream became now each instant more real, more acute; her trembling lips tried to utter a cry, but the sound was frozen on them, as looking round feverishly, her eyes rested

on the form of Horace Mott.

With a sudden access of strength, she rose to her feet, one hand resting

on the couch.

"Where am I? How dare you come near me! Oh, Heavens! what has happened to me?" She grew ghastly white again, and her lips only whispered the words: "What place is this?"

He stood calmly by the fire, a smile of triumph on his lips. "This is your home, Ulrica!" he said coolly and distinctly.

"My home!" she breathed rather than spoke. Her limbs were quivering with weakness; she felt sick and cold. She passed one hand over her eyes, as if to dispel the present vision, then gradually sank onto the couch, numb with dread and overwhelming fear.

"Yes, your future home," continued the man; "do you like it? Come,

let me lead you round, and show you my treasures - yours now."

He advanced towards her and stretched out his hand, but Ulrica recoiled from him as from a deadly poisonous snake, her great distraught eyes fixed

on him, wide with her disgust and fear.

"Don't touch me!" she murmured almost passionately; "don't come near me! I—I can't understand all yet; but I begin to know some of the truth. I"—she stopped for an instant—"I am in your power."

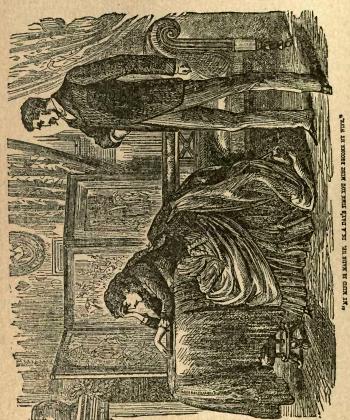
He met her eyes full; the smile never died from his lips.

"You are," was all he said.

Ulrica's head drooped; she did not utter a scream or an exclamation;

she seemed overwhelmed.

"Ulrica," said Mott, touched for an instant by her silent abject misery, "you need not fear me. I have told you that I love you"—she shuddered slightly, but he took no heed—"and as I love, so I honor you. I have brought you here against your will, because I knew, once free, you would never give yourself to me. Now - well, now you must; for though I respect you, though I hold you to be the purest of God's creatures on earth, the world henceforth would not judge you so. Were I even now at this moment to open wide my doors and bid you go forth, it would be use-



less. No; it may be mean, it may be a coward's act, but it is done—your good name, that priceless treasure of a lonely woman, is taken from you if you leave me now but as my wife. You—"

Ulrica stopped him; she knelt at his feet.

"Are you a man?" she whispered in broken sobs. "If so, in pity's name let me go! I could not be your—your wife, when every breath in my body, every beat of my heart, is given to—to him! Let me go—oh, have pity; be merciful! I am in your power, and I plead to you—see, I kneel to you! By all you hold holy; by the name of your mother; of your God, I—I—"

The words died away; she sank, crouched before him; a dark shadow passed over his face, his lips were compressed; he stooped and lifted her.

"Let us have no more of this. My mind is made up. Once settled, I never alter. In a day's time you must become my wife. This will be your apartment till then. Everything you want you shall have; but my wife you shall be!"

"There is no law to make me," Ulrica said, suddenly, as, in an instant, all weakness, tears and womanly pleading fell from her. She spoke coldly

and resolutely.

He frowned. He knew the truth of this well.

Only by touching her on the subject of her honor could he bring her round.

He was silent only for one second.

"True, there is no written law, but there is one existing, nevertheless. Go back to the world. Try to make your living. Where will you get employment with the taint and whisper of shame on your name? Will your lover receive you, or your friends take your hand? Try them."

"And this you call love!" said the girl, quietly, yet so contemptuously that he winced. "You love me; yet you first sully my honor—my self-respect—before you try to win even a passing thought of esteem from my heart. I would rather starve in a gutter—die in the street—than become your wife! Let me go. I am not afraid of the world. It is only those who have sinned that need fear. There is no sin in my life—God is my witness to that. All shame that comes upon me now is of your bringing—you, who profess to love me! Love! You cannot comprehend—you cannot understand—the beauty, the depth, the holiness of true love! It came to me, and will never go. The very thought of such a nature as yours makes me shudder; the very touch of your hand is pollution! A man to have spoken as you have spoken—acted as you have done—is no longer a man. He is a devil!"

The flood of passionate words poured from her pallid lips with a vehemence that astounded Horace Mott. He gazed at her lovely face, white as carven marble, silently as she ceased, then broke into a short laugh.

as carven marble, silently as she ceased, then broke into a short laugh.

"Bravo!" What an actress you would make! Upon my word, I think I must have you trained for the stage. You are more lovely now, Ulrica, than I have ever seen you. Yes; I think I like you better roused than placidly beautiful!"

The girl's head drooped with shame; she drew her cloak round her, and turned to the door. The heat of her agitation was fleeting fast, and with

it her strength; she trembled in every limb.

"After the words I have spoken," she whispered rather than said, "there is only one course open to you. I refuse to be your wife, neither threats nor entreaties will move me, therefore let me go. The world is

wide, we need never meet; perhaps before long a merciful peace and oblivion may come to me. It will be welcome, for the burden of crime and shame that has fallen upon me is almost more than I can bear; it has broken my heart. What have I to live for now? This is the last request I shall make to you: let me go now, and you will atone for all that has gone before!"

She had moved towards the door, but he stepped before her and laid

his hand on hers.

"I am sorry to be discourteous, but refuse you I must. You have spoken hard words to me, but that will not alter my purpose. As I have compromised you, so I act as a man ought, and lay my hand and heart at your feet, and if you are so quixotic as to refuse this reparation, then I must act for you, and decline to permit you to think for yourself. In plain words, Ulrica, I am your master, and I intend to be obeyed."

Horace Mott regarded her quietly, then walked to the fireplace and

rang the bell.

A middle-aged woman, clean and very respectable, answered the summons. She evinced no surprise at seeing Ulrica, but turned her whole

attention on her master.

"Graves," said he, "you must wait on this lady; give her everything she requires. She will remain here for a day or two, and then will become my wife, our marriage taking place by special license. Remember, she is your mistress; her commands are your laws."
"Yes, sir — I understand," answered Graves.

"Good, then. Come with me for one instant; I wish to speak to you." Horace Mott strolled leisurely towards the girl's crouching figure.

"Silly child!" he said half contemptuously. "Dry your tears. What use in railing at your fate? It can't be altered now, and your eyes are much too glorious to ruin in this way. Good-night!"

### CHAPTER XV.

"IND is that all?" inquired Dr. Strong.

He was sitting at a writing-table; before him was a man—an in-

describably shabby, dirty, genteel-looking person.

The room was large and airy; from the windows could be caught a glimpse of the wildest thoroughfare in London-it was the Langham Hotel. An inner room joined in which was a bed with curtains, etc.
"Yes, sir, that's all. We traced the young lady quite easy like to this

public-house; she stayed there three days, and then she went away with a

gentleman in a carriage."

Guy rose softly and closed the door leading into the bedroom.

"We must find her," he said decidedly to the detective. "Have you no further clew?"

The man shook his head.

"None, sir," he answered; "though I'm bound to say I still am suspicious. That landlady, Mrs. Cogger, seemed so confused like when we went and questioned her."

"She has been taken away - she never went willingly," Guy declared,

as if to himself.

"That's what I mean, sir," the detective chimed in hurriedly; "I think the landlady knows more than she will say, but I can't get anything further out of her."

"We must think."

Guy walked up and down with a white set face. It was a horrible dilemma. Ulrica was gone—worse, was, in all probability, in the power of this cruel villain Mott. How to act? What to do? In the inner room lay John Dunworthy, ill, prostrate with the blow that had come upon him, unable to give one helping hand; he had to think, to plan all by himself.

"Me and my mate are willing to do anything in our power, sir," said the detective, as he watched the man struggling with his thoughts. "Per-

'haps if you was to come to the landlady, it would do some good."

Guy lifted his head.

"Yes, I will do that," he answered at once. He rang the bell, and Sir John's man appeared.

"Gryce," he said, "remain by your master till I return; he must not be disturbed, remember."

" Very well, sir."

Gryce helped him on with his coat, and then nodding to the detective to

follow, Guy passed out.

Gryce sat obediently in the room for a while, reading the newspapers, then he stole softly to the bedroom. The sick man lay dozing uneasily; he needed nothing.

The valet turned his attention out of the window, yawning the while

most drearily.

Suddenly he looked round. The door had opened, and a lady stood in the room.

Gryce was at once the obsequious servant; notwitstanding the thick black veil and heavy cloak he recognized the guest at once.

"Go to No. 15; Lady Dunworthy has arrived; she is asking for you.

This is Dr. Strong's room? Yes; then I will wait for him."

Gryce bowed, and hurried away, and once alone Connie Wren threw

back her veil and drew a long breath.

Her face looked really pretty with its triumphant expression; there was

a fire in her cold eyes, and a flush of color on her fair cheeks.

"At last—it has come at last!" she muttered, stealing softly to the sick man's side; "in all my plans I never dreamt of this. How ill he looks! Well, I will cure him."

She threw off her cloak, sank into a chair beside the bed, and tend-

erly laid her hand on the man's fevered brow.

Sir John moved uneasily beneath her touch at first, but then it seemed to soothe him, and he murmured some confused whispers in which the eager

listener caught the name Ulrica.

"Always her!" she thought to herself with a frown. "Will he never forget her? She has deceived him, brought shame and disgrace upon herself, and yet he thinks only of her. Bah! I am a fool! I must give him time. Then, Madame Ulrica, we shall see who will triumph in the end!"

Sir John moved again several times, then opened his heavy eyes.

At first a gleam of joy shot into them as he saw a woman's form beside the bed, then that vanished, and he sighed wearily as he said with difficulty:

"Miss Wren - Connie - you here! Where - where is Strong?"

"Dr. Strong will be here directly. I am come to nurse you," whispered Connie, slipping on her knees beside the bed, dropping her voice to a gentle tender cadence. "I want to help you—to comfort you now in your great trouble—to do all I can to—to—bring her back."

Sir John carried her hand to his lips.

"You are good," he said slowly—"very good. I thank you." Connie's heart throbbed; this was the beginning of the end.

"Is - is my mother here?" he asked, after a pause.

Connie nodded.

"But she shall not trouble you — I will not let her. Ah, Sir John, think of me as a friend — a sister; trust in me and believe me."

The man turned his face towards her; her soft, womanly words fell on

his wounded heart like heavenly balm.

"I do," he whispered fervently; "I do, indeed. You are an angel of goodness. If — if you will help me now, you will do more for me than I can say."

Connie only smiled sweetly; then she sat beside him till his eyes closed once again in sleep, and his weary turmoil of thoughts were lost in peace-

ful oblivion.

For a long while Ulrica sat thinking. What was she to do?

Horace Mott's cruel, sinister face rose before her, and brought with it a shudder of dislike and fear; the very thought of his words stung her to madness.

Marriage with him - become the wife of a liar, a villain, such as he!

Never!

And yet even as she thought this her hands trembled, her heart sank.
What could she do? How escape from this prison and its horrible alternative? Graves, could she not bribe her? But with what?

Jewels she had none, and in her purse there was one solitary gold coin

beside a few shillings.

Ah, a thought came. She caught her dress in her hand eagerly—hurriedly. She remembered the draft Mrs. Loudon had sent. She had not posted it back; she would give that. Her hands searched the pocket; it was empty. Then she had been robbed also. Her last chance was gone.

Tears were dried up at their source; she sat like a statue carven in marble, and was in this attitude, when a slight noise caused her to start up-

right as Graves came in.

"You have taken my purse and letter," cried Ulrica feverishly. "Give them back to me at once. Oh, why are you so wicked, so cruel to me? Don't you see — can't you see I am brought here against my will? That man has dared to drag me here when I was senseless and could not help myself. He is a coward, and he is my greatest enemy! Oh, woman—woman! Help me; don't shut off your sympathy and your pity from me; indeed—indeed, I want it. I am alone—utterly alone in the world; only a girl, with no mother, no friends—no one to whom I can turn. You are a woman—perhaps you yourself have a daughter. Ah, I see by your face you have! Then, for her sake—for the sake of this girl who is—who must be dear to you, help me now! I cannot marry this man—I cannot—I cannot!"

Graves looked down at the slender form, with masses of warm brown hair tossed about the shoulders, and for one instant a passing expression of

pity dawned on her face. It was gone the next instant.

"I cannot help you," she said, stooping and lifting the girl to her feet; besides, why do you ask me? Mr. Mott wishes to marry you. Surely there is nothing dishonorable in that? If he had wished to harm you, or to shame you, he could have done so a dozen times; but he brought you to me. You have been in my care; he has not even remained in the house since he left you last night. Surely you are foolish! A man cannot do more than make a woman his wife, and that he loves you I can easily see."

"Loves me!" cried Ulrica bitterly. "Oh, what poor — what despicable love! I tell you I pleaded to him last night to let me go. I told him I could never marry him, and what did this good, this honorable man declare? That he had ruined my reputation, sullied my good name, and that if I would live, I must marry him. Love, indeed! Oh, he loves me greatly!"

Graves was silent for an instant.

"Perhaps he was wrong to say that," she observed after a while; "but you must have angered him or he would never have done so. I know Horace Mott well; he is a true, a brave, good man; he has proved it to me. I speak as I have found him."

Ulrica stared at the woman; she was almost enthusiastic; but as she met the girl's surprised look, the enthusiasm vanished; she was once more

the stolid, hard woman.

"Will you let me help you to dress, madame?" she asked deferentially.

"You refuse to give me any assistance to escape?"

Ulrica looked up quietly.

"Yes," Graves said as quietly; "my promise is pledged to Mr. Mott. Years ago, I gave him my word that if ever I could repay him for an action he did for me, I would do so. Three days ago he came to me and claimed my promise; it was to help him marry you. I do not seek to know why he wants that help—it is sufficient to me that he does need it, and so I give it to him. A promise with me is as sacred as an oath. I cannot break it."

"Not if you know that you are helping him to do that which is worse than cruel—which is a sin?" asked the girl very quietly, though she trem-

bled in every limb.

The woman nodded her head.

"The motive is not my affair," she said coldly. "I am not curious. I want to know nothing. As I said before, if he wishes to marry you, there can be no dishonor."

"There can be—there is!" cried Ulrica wildly. "Dishonor! contamination! horror! Oh, think—think if your daughter were in my place,

pleading for aid, would not your heart break?"

The soft look came once more over Graves' countenance.

"It is of her I am thinking. She was wronged, her life was ruined. Horace Mott avenged her wrong. He gave her peace at the last; he forced her betrayer to marry her before she died. When I learnt this I vowed to give him whatever he should ask. I have known him for years—from a boy. Once again, before my lips are sealed, I tell you he is true, he is brave, he is good; he does you no dishonor in offering you marriage; rather should you rejoice in winning such a man for your husband. I have done. I shall say no more. Breakfast is served in the next room; I will wait for you there."

She passed through the curtains as she finished, leaving Ulrica plunged into a maze of troubled thoughts, predominant among which was the one act that help was refused her, and she had to face the future alone.

### CHAPTER XVI.

.IKE one in a dream Ulrica performed her toilet. Had she been asked LIKE one in a dream Office performed her to describe what her sensations were that dull November morning, she

would have shaken her head.

To fathom the true nature of her heart was a task beyond her. She seemed to be another being, existing in another sphere. A century of years seemed stretched between herself and the happy Ulrica glorying in golden love, affection and friendship.

The memory of Sir John and her misery lived in her thoughts, but the acuteness of the pain was merged into a dull, vague sense of oppression

and dread.

Graves glanced at the girl's white face with a momentary feeling of pity. It was still beautiful, but it was the face of one who was crushed beneath a mental burden that threatened to overwhelm her altogether.

She had spread a dainty breakfast.

"Come and eat," she said quietly. "You have tasted no food for hours."

Ulrica shook her head.

"I cannot eat; the food would choke me."

Graves looked at the slender form in the black dress.

"You have more trouble than the thought of this marriage. What is it?" she asked suddenly, almost involuntarily.

Ulrica turned her wondrous star-like eyes upon the woman.

"My heart is broken," she said quietly, but unutterably sadly, "and my life is ended."

"You are young to say that."

"I am not yet twenty," Ulrica replied, dreamily gazing into the fire; "and yet"—here she pressed her hand to her heart—"here I seem an old woman, worn down with weariness, with grief, with - shame."

"There is no shame in your young life, if faces can be trusted."

Graves said this as if to herself.

Ulrica gave a sigh.

"And yet dishonor will cling to me till I die."

The woman opened her lips, but she checked herself, and turning to the table, said no more.

Ulrica left the fire and went to the window.

There were houses opposite—big, cold, sententious-looking places. Not a face was to be seen at any window. There was an air of calmness and quietness that struck the new comer with a chill of discomfort. To Ulrica it made no feeling at all; she gazed, but she was scarcely conscious of what she saw. Her limbs were trembling, her head heavy; she had a pain in her throat.

"I am going to be ill," she said to herself, as with a prolonged shiver

she went back to the fire. "Perhaps I shall die."

She sat on a low chair, bending to the blaze, which did not warm her chilled limbs; and then, so weak had she grown, she swallowed obediently, but with difficulty, the food Graves brought to her.

The woman stood looking down at her as she sank back and closed her

eyes.

"Am I doing right?" muttered Graves to herself. "Her poor distraught face goes straight to my heart; and yet—I have promised—I cannot go back. Horace Mott could not be the villain she says, or he would never have done what he did for my poor Florrie. No, no; I must trust him. I must keep my promise; yet I wish she had not asked for help—it troubles me."

She withdrew softly, and Ulrica lay before the fire; she had dropped into

a doze, and the clock ticked on musically in the silence.

Suddenly Ulrica woke from her sleep, her heart beating wildly, her head

reeling; instinctively she felt that the hour of her struggle had come.

There, with his arm resting on the broad marble mantel-piece, a smile of triumph mingling with the glow of unrestrained passion and admiration in his eyes, stood Horace Mott, watching her earnestly.

"Well," he said, gayly, "my poor, pale darling, have you no word for

me?"

Ulrica pressed her hand to her throbbing heart; she called all her courage

to her rescue, and rose to her feet.

"I have a few words," she said in a voice that sounded weak and strange to her own ears, "and they are but a repetition of what I said to you last night. Give me my—my freedom; let me go!"

He only smiled.

"Still on the same tune! I thought we arranged all that most completely

last night. I don't feel disposed to open the subject again."

"Have you no pity?" murmured the girl, dropping her face for an instant on her hands. As she lifted it again she went on slowly: "Why do you treat me like this? What harm have I ever done you? You came across my path like a serpent. God knows I had little happiness in my young days, and you broke the golden glorious gladness that had just come to me."

"Let us be correct," Horace said coolly, glancing at his reflection in the mirror, and caressing his mustache. "It was not I who shattered your happiness; it was the knowledge of your father's crime. You seem to

forget that you are the daughter of a murderer."

The girl shivered as if he had struck her.

"Forget!" she whispered. "Oh, God, it is written on my heart in letters of fire—the shame, the horror of it!"

He watched her with a slight sneer as she sank into the chair, and there

was silence between them for awhile.

By-and-by she lifted her head and passed one cold hand across her

eyes.

"Mr. Mott," she said, faintly but clearly, "once more, for the last time, I ask you to be generous. I cannot marry you—let me go. I am not afraid of the world. I have suffered so horribly the last few days, I fear nothing now. To marry you would be a sin—a mockery. You know my feelings towards you, and as a man—a man with a spark of courage and honor about him, I beg you to release me from this place and to promise me I shall be free from you forever."

A dark scowl had settled on his face; he had his arms folded across his breast. He looked at her quietly for an instant, then said, slowly and

deliberately:

"Well, you may go!"

Ulrica rose with strength born of the rush of delight to her heart and brain.

"God bless you!" she said hurriedly, clasping her hands tight together; "I knew you would hear me. Forgive me for all the hard things I have said, but—but I was driven to utter them. We will forget all that is past, and say good-bye now, for we shall not meet again."

She turned away, and was moving to the inner room to get her cloak, her heart still thrilling with the wonderful relief, when his voice, clear and

cold, rang after her:

"Stay!"

Ulrica turned round, and then she knew that she had mistaken him. There was no generosity, no sympathy, no manly honor in Horace Mott.

"I say you may go, but first, had you not better hear my conditions?"

Ulrica unconsciously drew nearer, but she did not speak.

"I offer you once more my hand in marriage," Horace Mott went on very quietly. "Once more, do you refuse to become my wife?"

"I do - I must!" broke from the girl's lips faintly.

"You ask for freedom; you may go — go now, but as surely as you refuse to become my wife, as surely as you leave me, so surely will I strike you to the heart, for I will kill your lover, John Dunworthy!"

He met the great sapphire eyes, full of unspeakable dread, calmly with

half a smile.

"Now I bid you go. You are free, but you are warned. Perhaps you have doubts that I would carry out my threat; try me—that is all. I know I am behind my time; men do not kill, you would say, in the nineteenth century, for pique or dislike; no, but they murder for hatred, for jealously, for love—the love such as lives—burns in my heart for you, Ulrica."

He strode over to the girl, snatched her two hands in his, and gazed into her white stricken face with eyes that shone like fire. She could not struggle, she could not release herself; his horrible threat, his words, ran before

her eyes, and beat into her ears.

"You have your choice," he went on hurriedly and passionately; "reject me, defy me, and your lover shall be dead before a week is over. Ah, I can do it, and I swear to you I will, if you set yourself against me. Your answer—give me your answer! What is it to be—peace or war? War to the bitter end?"

"Well?" breathed Horace Mott.

"How can I fight with you?" she said, coldly, contemptuously, yet heart-brokenly; "our weapons are not equal. You have won. For his sake—the man I love better than life itself—I give myself to you—the man I hold the most despicable, the most cowardly, the most horrible of all God's creatures!"

Horace Mott laughed, but he winced nevertheless.

"Hard words, my beautiful Ulrica—hard words!" he said, tightly folding his arms round her, and drawing her shivering reluctant form close to him; "but they do not wound me. I knew you must yield. I have arranged everything. In two hours' time we shall be man and wife, then let him come between us who dares!"

He drew her head to his shoulder, bent his lips and kissed her cold ones long and passionately.

Ulrica lay silent, still, as though life itself was extinct.

She did not repulse him. She had submitted, and the victory - poor, pitiful victory, such as it was — was his.

The November fog crept into the church like a gray spectre that would not be rested. It lingered and wreathed itself round the stone pillars, it hung over the altar and its dim religious light.

No speck, no gleam of sunshine broke the gray gloom.

The echoes hollowed and returned from the arched roof; the stillness

and strange loneliness were like the silence of a tomb.

Before the altar was a small group of people. A girl, clad in a black dress, a cloak about her slender graceful form; a hat that shadowed but could not hide her white, haggard young face; a man, nonchalant, darkly handsome and resolute; a woman, ordinary looking, in bonnet and shawl, standing behind the bride; the clerk, with open book for the responses, and the priest of God.

It was Ulrica's marriage. She heard the solemn tones ring out through the vast silent church, but she heeded them not. She was wondering, in a vague dull way, if the clergyman would perform the ceremony if he

knew the truth.

Her lips repeated the words she was bade say, but she repeated blindly, mechanically, as a child heedless of their sense or meaning. She knelt and rose obediently at the clerk's whisper, but she did it all as in a dream.

It seemed to her another being who stood there in the gray cold mist, taking the solemn vows of love and duty to Horace Mott. She lived only

in a vague, dark shadow, incomprehensible and mysterious.

The clergyman was struck by the girl's pale beautiful face, and might have had his doubts, had not Horace Mott warned him that the marriage had to be performed quietly, as the bride was mourning the loss of her father, and the traces of trouble he would read in her face were from this

The last word was said; they knelt in silence for a few seconds; then, taking his wife's cold limp hand in his, Horace Mott drew her into the

He hastily scrawled his name in the register, and put the pen into Ulrica's

She hesitated at first, as if she did not know what to do with it, but the clergyman gently guided her hand to the line, and she wrote her maiden name for the last time.

Graves then attested it and the clerk.

"Good-by, Mrs. Mott," said the clergyman courteously, and kindly holding out his hand; "we may not meet again, but I wish you every possible happiness in your married life. You are very young, and may expect that." Then turning to Mott, he said with half a smile: "You must take your wife away to some sunny clime; her cheeks seem to have lost their roses."

"We start at once for the South of France, and that will soon restore her," Horace Mott replied with a show of great warmth. "This church is rather cold this gloomy weather; let us hope the rest of the day may be

brighter. Come, my darling, we will go."

They turned away; Ulrica had said nothing, and again a doubt crept into

the clergyman's mind at her strange manner and white face.

Graves followed quietly; against herself she was sorely troubled. Ulrica had unconsciously touched this hard woman's heart, and this hasty marriage, the girl's eyes full of dawning horror, struck her afresh with compunctuous pangs and pity.

At the church door Horace Mott turned.

"You may go, Graves; you have done all I required. Here is a tenpound note; celebrate our wedding how you like. I am sure you made Mrs. Mott so comfortable that she will return to your house when we come back from France."

Graves took the note; her eyes were fixed on Ulrica's white, drawn face. Knowledge of all had returned to the girl; she no longer dreamt,

she was horribly alive to everything.

The older woman looked at her, and half timidly put out her hand.

"I hope from my heart, madam, that you will be happy. I shall be both gratified and honored if you will return to my house."

Ulrica took no notice of the hand held out; she turned her wondrous violet-gray eyes on the speaker slowly. "You refused me help when I needed it most. I hope I shall never see

you again."

"Come, that is scarcely cordial," observed Horace Mott, a little ill at ease."

Graves' face flushed crimson, but only for an instant.

"I would have helped you a hundred times if I had not promised. Mr. Mott brought happiness to my child, and ——"
"That will do," curtly broke in Ulrica's husband; "I know all about

your gratitude. Good-morning. Come, Ulrica."

Graves stood watching them as they went down the steps to the street, and walked away.

A mist of unshed tears was in her eyes; she had not wept for years.

"God forgive me if I have done wrong!" was her prayer as she went slowly to her home.

Horace Mott drew Ulrica's unresisting hand through his arm.

"We must walk to a cab," he said tersely - the church was out of the beaten track - "then you must have lunch, buy yourself some clothes, and we will leave for Liverpool to-night. Are you not curious to know where I am taking you?"

Ulrica made no reply.

"Your lips are so pale, your cheeks so thin, my darling, that I have decided on a sea-voyage. A trip of seven or eight days is the thing for you, so I have secured our berths in the Oregon, and we sail for New York to-morrow.

Ulrica still said nothing, and he bit his lip as he glanced ever and anon

at her white set face.

"By Heavens! I will break her indifference - turn her hatred to pleading and love - if I have to kill her!" he muttered to himself.

A hansom crept near them at this instant, and he hailed it.

They were soon whirled into the bustling streets. Ulrica was entirely ignorant of what part of the city she was traversing. She had been conveyed in a four-wheeler from Graves' house, and even had she tried to discover the locality, the dense fog hanging over everything would have prevented her. Now she cared not where she went, having one wish only in her broken heart — that she might die, and end her despairing shame and misery.

The cab drew up at a restaurant in Regent street. Horace Mott got out, and, with an imperative movement of the hand, made the girl do likewise. He ordered a luncheon, and called for the papers. His orders were

obeyed promptly, and a budget of journals placed at his hand.

He ceremoniously pushed some society papers towards Ulrica, and mechanically she opened them. Reading was far from her intention, but the printing was a relief from the picture of that dark, handsome face opposite, smiling with arrogant triumph upon her.

Horace Mott, secure in the success of his plans, gave himself up to a few minutes enjoyment of the day's news. He had not progressed far when

a faint sound, almost a moan, came to his ears.

He looked up hurriedly. Ulrica was gazing at the printed page with wide distraught eyes, and a face grown, if possible, paler and thinner.

"What is the matter?" he inquired in a quick, low voice.

She did not move or speak, and drawing the paper towards him he saw

at once the cause of her suffering. It was only a few lines:
"I am sorry to hear that Sir John Dunworthy lies dangerously ill at the Langham. Lady Dunworthy is up from the castle to nurse her son, who is in the hands of the best physicians, aided by Dr. Strong. I also understand that Sir John Dunworthy's marriage is postponed indefinitely."

Horace Mott's lip curled with a triumphant sneer; he tossed the paper

back.

" Poor, weak fool!" was all he said.

In her heart Ulrica was saying over and over again:

"Ill - dangerously ill - dying, perhaps, and it is I who brought him to

this-I who will have killed him!"

She sat as in a trance, heedless of the many glances expressive of admiration, astonishment, and, in some cases, pity, turned on her. She would have sat on for hours, had not Mott savagely broken in on her mute agony.

"Eat -you must eat," he whispered; then he ordered some champagne

and poured her out a glass.

Ulrica swallowed a few mouthfuls of soup, but would not touch the wine, and seeing that force in this public place was worse than useless, Horace Mott affected a composure he was far from feeling, paid the bill, and drawing her hand through his arm, led her away.

Once in the street his jealous anger burst forth.

"If you dare to think of that man again, I will kill him!" Ulrica turned her head slowly, and looked at him curiously.

"Are you king of my heart? Can you control my thoughts?" she asked him in a strange manner.

They were the first words she had addressed to him.

He laughed half confusedly; something in the girl whom he had so cruelly forced to become his wife brought a wave of self-shame over him.

It was gone the next moment.

"No; but I can your life," he cried. "And what is more, I will. Henceforth you are mine - mine alone. Understand, you are my slave. If I order, you must obey. It is just as well to give you your lesson early; it will prevent mistakes."

A great flood of burning resentment and womanly pride, fed by her

hatred and contempt, suddenly welled up in Ulrica's heart.

They were in Bond street now, approaching a crossing. Gorgeous carriages filled the roadway, throngs of smart people the pavements. A wild unconquerable thought came into the girl's overburdened mind to free herself from his hold and escape. She drew her hand quietly from his arm.

Horace Mott was not conscious of this; he was looking eagerly from

right to left to effect a safe crossing, when suddenly Ulrica slipped from his side. He tried to grasp her cloak. She was gone, and was just before him. Uttering a fierce imprecation, he strode after her.

There was a loud shout of confusion, a babel of cries and voices, and Ulrica, turning with heaving heart and wild frightened eyes, saw the form of her husband, her gaoler, her foe, lying in the mud, a senseless, inanimate form beneath the prancing feet of a terrified horse.

The sight horrified her — it seemed to magnetize her. She stood rooted

to the spot, spell-bound with the sickness of horror.

## CHAPTER XVII.

DOZENS of people immediately rushed to the scene of the accident; the policeman was shouting to the alarmed coachman and occupants of the carriage; exclamations of horror, surprise, pity, rose from the crowd. No one remarked the slender figure in the black cloak standing with white distraught face and hands clenched tightly together; all attention was turned on the injured man.

As in a dream, Ulrica saw them lift him from the road to a shop; her eyes were glued on his inanimate form; but as she saw him carried away, with horrible blood-stains and torn clothes, she gave a deep, shuddering

sigh, and grasped a lamp-post to prevent herself from falling.

A sympathetic woman noticed her then.

"Horrible sight; wasn't it? You look quite pale; go and get something

warm. These sort of things don't do no one no good!"

Ulrica murmured some unintelligible words, and turning, walked up Bond street at a nervous, agitated speed. Suddenly a sense of wild relief. almost delight, had come in the midst of her horror. She was free - free from this man whom she dreaded and feared!

Ulrica was rich; she possessed two rings, in one of which gleamed three diamonds. She hesitated for one moment to take anything that had been his; she was almost flinging them into the mud; but stern necessity lay

before her, so she refrained.

Drawing her hat well over her brow, she entered a jeweler's shop, and, with a voice that shook with shame, offered her rings for sale.

The young man looked at her curiously.

"We don't buy second-hand things," he said off hand. "You had better go to a pawnbroker's, you know — where they will advance you money on your goods. There is one close by, in Duke street."

Ulrica thanked him and went away. The young man looked after her

and whistled.

"Strange!" he observed to his companion; "quite a new wedding-ring, too! The old story, I suppose - been taken in."

Ulrica asked her way to Duke street, and timidly entered the pawn-

broker's.

To her joy she got five pounds on the two rings—a fifth part of the diamonds' value, but to her a fortune - and then, with the money tightly clasped in her hands, stood debating what to do next.

She must get away somewhere and be lost, for if - her color faded again - if he were not badly hurt, he would search for her, and then - well, death

itself would be preferable.

A longing to know, to be satisfied, came over her. She would go back to the scene of the accident. She remembered the way well. It was growing quite dark now as she hurried along; to her it seemed years since the morning.

Bond street was comparatively empty now; the carriages were bowling swiftly homewards, the passengers hurrying to their cozy firesides, no one

to recognize the pale trembling girl as she hurried on.

She reached the corner where her freedom had come; no sign of the horror remained. A policeman was marching solemnly along; to him she went.

"Please can you tell me anything about the accident that happened here

this afternoon? Was - was the gentleman killed?"

The man answered her civilly; the question did not surprise him, for every one spoke of the accident.

"I can't tell you that, miss," he said, "but they know over at that shop.

I think he was took to St. George's Hospital, but I ain't sure."

Ulrica was thanking the man faintly, and was about to go on, when another policeman sauntered up, and in answer to his mate's question, said: "He were agoing to the 'ospital, but they found his address - some

chambers, I think, and he's took there. Was you wanting to know, miss?"

He looked sharply at Ulrica.

"No, no; only sorry. I wanted to inquire for him," she managed to

"Ah, it seems a sad thing like. 'Pears the gent was only married this morning; must have been going to join his wife in a hurry or something; they found his marriage lines in his pocket along of his letters. Quite a romance, ain't it, miss? But he ain't so badly hurt, only cut and shaken a

good bit. They say he'll be all right in a week or so."

"Yes," whispered the girl, moving away with faltering footsteps; "quite aromance." Once away, the horror and fear returned in full force; she put her hand on some railings close beside her, and looked up to the dark sky. "Oh, God," she prayed, "keep me from him. I am in bitter sorrow, help me to bear it; give me strength, let me not murmur, but submit to Thy will."

The faint whisper broke from her overcharged heart, seeming to ease her; a sense of comfort stole over her. What sin had she done in all her young life? God was not punishing her for her wickedness; she was chosen

to bear much, but as He chastened her, so was she loved.

She grasped the friendly railings for a few minutes longer, then determined to push on, secure some place for the night, and then make her

Ulrica went slowly on; once more she was in Regent street, though this

she did not know.

She hurried out of the bustle and confusion in search of some quieter

spot; surely she could find a rest until morning?

On and on she dragged. Sometimes she stopped hesitatingly before a shop, thinking to go in and ask for directions, then the fear of being found or known sent her on.

At last she came to a standstill; she was beside a church, in front of her stretched a great huge building, gas-light and fire-glow gleaming from its numerous windows. A respectable-looking laundress was on the pavement, resting her basket. Ulrica summoned up courage.

"Can you tell me," she said faintly, almost too weak to speak, "where

- where I could get a bedroom for the night, cheap, respectable, not too

The woman looked at her curiously; she noted the rich cloak, and wondered.

"Well, I don't know," she said. "I lets rooms, but then it wouldn't be good enough."

"Oh, yes—yes," murmured the girl; "anything will do."
"You look ill," remarked the woman, picking up her basket; "tired, I expect. Well, I'll take you gladly. You look a lady. If you are afraid of me, you can go in there; they'll answer for me at the Langham, I know; I have worked for them often."

"The Langham!" gasped Ulrica, sinking back.

The woman put down her basket, and at this moment a gentleman was passing; he was about to step into the road to avoid a drunken woman, as he thought, when the exclamation from the laundress arrested him.

" Poor thing! she's fainted."

In an instant the man was beside her.

"Can I help you? I am stronger than you."

He spoke kindly, and by the lamp-light the laundress saw he was a clergyman.

"Oh, thank you, sir. I don't know who she is; but she was just a-coming home to take a bedroom of me for the night, when she falls down like this."

The clergyman stooped and looked into the girl's face.

"Great Heavens!" he exclaimed. "Mrs. Mott! Why, this is \_\_\_" He stopped, all the doubt that had grown in his heart that morning as he spoke the marriage-service over Ulrica's bent head, the uncomfortable thoughts that, together with the memory of her pale, beautiful countenance, had haunted him all day, were verified.

"Do you know her, sir?" asked the woman.

The clergyman glanced round over the fast-growing crowd, and his determination was soon made.

"Yes, I know her," he answered. "I will take her home. Call a

So before the very building, in a room of which lay John Dunworthy fighting for life in the throes of brain fever, was stricken down the girl he loved beyond all else — the girl who had stunned him, shocked him, broken his heart — the girl Ulrica Messenger.

Mrs. Cogger was much alarmed at the second appearance of the detect-

ive, in company this time with Guy Strong.

She was not wont, as a rule, to set much store by her husband's opinions, but this time she was bound to confess that in his slow, heavy fashion, he had jumped at something like the truth.

Tears came to her eyes and rolled down her cheeks as Guy questioned her closely, his agitation and distress making him appear to her terribly

stern.

"Oh, dear, sir, I can't say how grieved I am! The poor young thing, and I'd grown to like her, although she was only here a few days. But could he be so wicked; he seemed so fond-like?"

"You tell me she fainted almost immediately she saw him?"

"Yes, sir, the very instant; but, of course, we thought it was because she was worn out with trouble, and the sudden sight of her husband knocked her over. It was all done so hurriedly, too; me and Jane was quite flustered. Here's the haddress the gent gave me; but this person tells me there ain't no such place. Oh, sir, I do hopes you will believe I would have cut my hand off sooner than have helped that poor young creature into more trouble."

Then Guy woke from his own musing at her distress.

"I do believe it," he said, with one of his rare smiles; "but when you deal with villainy such as this, you must be armed at all points. Don't accuse yourself of anything. I am sure your face speaks the truth, and goodness is written on it."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" exclaimed poor Mrs. Cogger; "but can't I help

you? Oh, is there nothing I can do?"
"Nothing, I'm afraid. We must employ more detectives; for she must

and shall be found, if human brains and hands can do it?"

Guy held further conference with the detective before he returned home. The only available clew they had was the coachman, whom Mrs. Cogger declared she would know again, and to find him Guy could think of no better method than advertising.

When he arrived at the Langham, he found Dunworthy fast asleep, with

Connie sitting beside him.

Guy greeted her gently, but frowned a little when he heard that Lady Dunworthy had traveled up to nurse her son, and was at that instant in the hotel.

"She must not excite him," he declared; "his brain is now in the most

inflammatory condition."

"I will keep her away. You may depend on me." While she was speaking, Connie was plotting.

"I must be friends with him, or he will prevent my seeing Sir John. I suppose his one and only thought now is that girl."

Outwardly she observed gently:

"You look worn out. Rest a while. Have - have you any news?" The anxious inflection in her voice was cleverly done.

"No," said Guy with a long-drawn sigh; "none as yet."

He did not intend to say much of Horace Mott, till he knew the truth. "How sorry I am!" murmured Connie, uttering the lie easily. "He," with a gesture to the sick-room — "he is quite broken down about it, poor fellow!"

#### CHAPTER XVIII.

"TRE you better?"
Ulrica moved in a vague strange way. The voice uttering these words sounded curiously distant, yet her eyes were fastened upon a face quite near at hand. She was in bed. Of that she was conscious, for her head rested on a sweet-smelling pillow, over which her masses of hair were strewn, and her arms rested on a snow-white coverlet.

" Are you better now?"

Ulrica's senses cleared; she turned her head a little nearer the speaker.

"Where am I?" she whispered.

"Safe with friends," was the answer. "No; I know you have never seen me before. Still I will call myself your friend because I have grown to know you during the last twenty-four hours. Now, let me lift you, and try and drink this beef

Ulrica made no resistance; she allowed herself to be pushed forward and swallowed the beef-tea, but her eyes were wandering round in a curious, wondering way. She looked terribly ill, her face was almost gaunt, but the beauty of her eyes seemed increased rather than diminished, they shone so large and lustrous.

A gentle hand smoothed back her hair from her brow, and as she rested

once more on the pillow, the voice went on:

"Now, I want you to be good and not ask any questions just yet. You must have some more sleep.

And the speaker smoothed the thin white hand with her own.

She was a woman of middle-age, with a plain but benevolently sweet

face, and that indescribable air which denotes the lady.

She sat and watched the girl's eyelids close, and the peaceful touch of slumber steal across Ulrica's lovely countenance before she moved. Then a step sounded cautiously on the carpet, and, turning, she saw a man in clerical dress.

"How is she now?" he whispered. "Better," she formed with her lips.

They both gazed silently at the unconscious young face, and then turned

"Have you come to any conclusion, dear?" asked the lady, as they went softly into a room adjoining.

The clergyman shook his head.

"I was waiting to ask her about herself when she was well enough; it is a case which pains and perplexes me. I cannot rid myself of a reproach in that I had a share in her marriage."

"You distress yourself needlessly, dear," replied his wife gently. "How

were you to know? You were deceived yourself."

Dr. Drewitt sighed a little.

"My mind misgave me directly I saw her face. How beautiful she is, Agnes, and very young!"
"Quite a child yet."

Mrs. Drewitt was thoughtfully silent for a few moments, then she said: "There is a purse in her pocket; perhaps that would give us some clew, but I hesitated to open it. I would rather she told me her story herself. Alan, we — we cannot let her go back into the world without a protest. Our home is lonely, and —

Dr. Drewitt took his wife's hand and looked at her with an inexpressible

look of tenderness.

"And our child's place is empty — that is what is in your heart, my wife. Well, unless we can persuade her to go back to her friends, should she have any, our home is hers."

Mrs. Drewitt pressed her lips to her husband's hand.

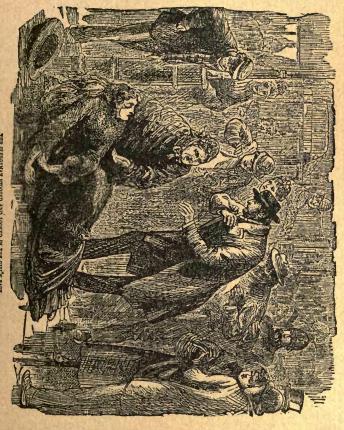
"She has our Margaret's eyes, Alan," she whispered; "it seemed like an angel from heaven when she looked at me last night as you carried her in!"

For a brief time the fog left London. The mornings broke sunshiny and bright. Ulrica watched two such mornings steal through the dawn, lying quietly in her luxurious bed.

She was not exactly ill, but an exhaustion had fallen upon her after the

horror of the wedding-day.

In her excitement she had walked miles, and, added to the mental fight she was enduring, this had prostrated her.



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Her thoughts were a confused muddle during the two days she lay in bed -a mixture of bright sunny moments, then awful gloom, then the consciousness of trouble lurking at every corner to spring out and seize upon her.

Mrs. Drewitt brought her work, and at very quietly by the girl's side, watching the emotions that flitted across Ulrica's pale face, and wondering,

with sad sympathy, what the truth of her suffering was.

It was a source of undefinable comfort to Ulrica, the presence of that sweet-looking woman, and in that comfort she was content to revel while she felt so weak; but as her strength ebbed back, Mrs. Drewitt's gentle face recalled another - that of Guy's mother, and from that her mind wandered on, over every cruel stone in that pathway of mental sorrow, shame and misery.

It was on the eve of the second day that this agony reached its height. As Mrs. Drewitt sat sewing very quietly, deep in her thoughts, Ulrica suddenly rose in the bed. She had a flush on her pale cheeks, and her eyes

were burning.

"Give me my clothes," she said, hurriedly, in a low choked voice. "I

must get away at once!"

She had all in a second experienced the terrible dread and repulsion of Horace Mott's presence; her memory vividly recalled the fact that he was not dead - not even badly wounded, but perhaps, at this very moment, on her track.

Mrs. Drewitt rose quickly.

"You shall have your clothes, dear, if you want them," she said, soothingly; "but it is too late to go away now. It is nearly night time."

Ulrica let her hand be clasped in the older woman's cool tender one. "But he will find me," she whispered, her heart beating so wildly that its throbbing was plainly seen in her fair, white throat; "he will find me again."

"He cannot come here," said Mrs. Drewitt, adopting that easy tone of assurance always calculated to have its effect on children and invalids. "I

will take care of you."
"Will you?" Ulrica turned her thin, eager, lovely face round. "Oh, God will bless you! Help me now, and you will be blessed indeed!"

Tears stood in Mrs. Drewitt's eyes.

"You shall stay with me for a while, dear," she murmured. "You are far from strong, and-"

"Ah, but I must get away!" broke in the girl feverishly. "You don't know him. He is a fiend. He will find me! Yes — yes, I know he will, and he will take me away, for I married him — I am his wife!"

"You are safe here," repeated Mrs. Drewitt, scarcely knowing what to say, but putting her arm around the girl and drawing the head, with its

masses of hair, gently onto her shoulder.

Ulrica rested back for a while.

"Safe!" she murmured. "If I could feel that — if I could have peace. But all is such bustle, such noise; and London is so small, that is the misery. The Langham! that is the Langham! and Jack is there, ill, dying, all through me. Oh, Jack, Jack, my love, my life! what shall I do!"
The wandering words ended in a burst of passionate sobs. Mrs. Drewitt

did not try to check the tears or soothe the girl. She let her weep on, only

holding her still in her arms.

After a few moments Ulrica grew calmer, then she dried her eyes and

looked up.

"How good you are!" she whispered, with a broken catch in her voice, "to me, a stranger. I am better now; I will rest on for a while."

"That is wise," declared Mrs. Drewitt, lightly pushing the pillow comfortably under the girl's head; "now, lie still while I finish this corner of my work; then you may talk if you like."

Ulrica lay silent, obediently watching the busy needle fly in and out; the

flood of tears had relieved her; she felt calmer now. "There; I am finished! Now, shall we chat?"

Ulrica turned her eyes onto the fire.

"Will you tell me where I am and how I got here?" she asked gently. "You are in my husband's and my house. Our name is Drewitt. He is a clergyman, and he married you three days ago."

Ulrica gave a faint shudder.

"He was passing along the very top of Regent street on the evening of the same day, when by God's mercy he happened to see you just as you fell to the ground in a faint. Do you remember?"

"Yes," whispered the girl; "I remember now."

She closed her eyes as the horror of that day came back to her, then

opened them as a thought came hurriedly to her mind.

"And you have taken me in and kept me here? Oh, how can I thank you? I amutterly alone and friendless—that is," she added slowly, "I must renounce my friends. There are several who I think would cling to me, but it is impossible."

Mrs. Drewitt was silent; she saw the quivering lips, and the tears steal once more into the sad eyes, and her heart ached with her sympathy for

this girl's sorrow.

"Perhaps I - I ought to tell you," Ulrica said in very low tones; "it is

but right, and yet -

"Tell me nothing," whispered the older woman; "I am content to keep you as you are. Your face is your character — it is enough for me."

Ulrica pressed her hot lips to the hand held out to her.

"Yes, I will tell you," she said. "My-my father was a murdererhe killed my mother!"

Mrs. Drewitt's clasp just tightened on the girl's hand. "That is not your sin, my child," she said gently.

"Then you do not shrink from me?" Ulrica cried.
"Shrink from you! Why should I?" Mrs. Drewitt bent and kissed the sweet face. "Now I am going to sit beside you, and you shall tell me all; it will ease your heart, I think."

"It will -- it will!" replied Ulrica restlessly.

And so with her hand clasped tight in that of the clergyman's wife, bit by bit Ulrica told her history, dwelling briefly, almost tersely, on her summer dream of gladness, then on to the bitter end.

Mrs. Drewitt listened without a word till Ulrica's voice died away into

silence, then she bent and kissed her again tenderly.

"My poor tired lamb, the burden is indeed heavy for you; but be comforted; there may be sin, shame attached, but it is not yours. Let me tell my husband this story; he will give you greater comfort than I can. And turn to us, dear, as friends, who will be firm to you whatever comes."

Ulrica tried to speak, but words would not come easily; she was thoroughly exhausted by her emotion, and by-and-by, still clasping Mrs.

Drewitt's hand, she fell into a deep, dreamless slumber.

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#### CHAPTER XIX.

MREE days passed on, and Ulrica, tenderly nursed by Mrs. Drewitt. recovered her strength sufficiently to rise and descend to the pretty drawing-room.

Dr. Drewitt knew all her history from his wife, but they naturally re-

frained from speaking on this subject till the girl was more herself.

It was Ulrica, after all, who first led them to it.

She was sitting at breakfast in her black dress, looking very pale and wan, yet with all her beauty returned, listening to the lively chit-chat of her kind host and hostess, when she broke in on a short silence.

"I have a difficult task before me," she said hurriedly - "that of trying to thank you both for all your great, great goodness to me. Words are not easy, but God will bless you for it!"

"Now, we are not going to talk about this, if you please," replied Dr. Drewitt promptly, as her head drooped and her eyes filled with tears; "we want to see you smile and look happy, my dear."

Ulrica shook her head.

"I shall never be happy again," she said slowly.

Mrs. Drewitt rose, and bending over Ulrica, kissed her gently, saying the while:

"You have suffered so much that you have grown tired and weak, but after all, dear child, you are very young; life for you is just beginning. You must try and dismiss these morbid thoughts."

"Morbid!" repeated Ulrica with a shudder; "but they are real—hideously real! How can I forget my dead mother? How can I forget I—

I am that man's wife?"

Dr. Drewitt was silent for a while.

"Did Mott give you full particulars of your mother's death?" he asked, rising and walking to the window.

Ulrica passed her hand across her brow and thought.

"No," she said, slowly; "only - only that she had been murdered

"Hum! You tell me that he forced you to marry him by threatening to kill Sir John Dunworthy?" continued the vicar.

"Yes," formed rather than spoke Ulrica's pale lips.

The mention of her lost lover's name pierced her like a sword-thrust. The vicar folded his arms across his breast and walked back to the table.

"Then," he said, with great decision, "it is my belief that he deceived you. Mind, I only say my belief. A man to have treated you as he has love, and so he determined to force you into his power. Where are his done is more than a coward - he is a villain. You refused to listen to his proofs of your father's crime? Let him bring forward facts!"

"He mentioned one man's name," Ulrica interrupted; scarcely speaking

for her agitation—Sir Geoffrey Denvil. He knows of—"
"We will find Sir Geoffrey Denvil," replied Dr. Drewitt, promptly. "This matter shall be thoroughly, though quietly investigated."

Ulrica had buried her face in her hands, now she lifted it.

"I never stopped to think of deceit," she said, almost dreamily. "Somehow his words seemed to be so true. My young life returned to me. No

mention of my mother's name; no love, no friends, except Sam; all strange - cut off, as it were, from every living thing. His - his words seemed all at once to explain all this - why I had dreaded my father; why I could never love him.

"Still, I repeat, until I get proofs, I shall not believe it." Ulrica came forward and took his hand, pressing her lips to it.

"How good you are!" she whispered. "How good!"

"How good you are!" sne winsperce.
"I said Alan would comfort you," cried Mrs. Drewitt, with wifely pride.
"I said Alan would comfort you," cried Mrs. Drewitt, with wifely pride.
"There "Yes; and I mean to help her, too," said the vicar, promptly. are two men we must seek out at once to make inquiries of - Sir Geoffrey Denvil, and this priest, Father Lawrence; he will throw most light on the matter, I fancy. Leave everything to me, my dear."

Ulrica clasped his hand nervously.

"But if he - he finds me, must I go with him? Oh, say I need not! I

fear him - I loathe him!"

The vicar patted her bent head; his eyes met his wife's and they looked grave, but there was only a tone of lightness and comfort in his voice as he said:

"He has not found you yet. 'Sufficient for the day is the evil

thereof.'"

There was a little silence, and then Mrs. Drewitt came near to Ulrica. "We have arrived at one conclusion, dear," she observed, slowly. "Your friend, Dr. Strong, should know you are safe and well; think of his anxiety - of the pain you must have caused his mother and himself."

"Don't," pleaded Ulrica brokenly - "don't speak of it! If you only knew what I have suffered when I have remembered them! But I can't see Uncle Guy; he would want to take me back to Bathurst, and that

would kill me.'

"I appreciate your difficulty," the vicar answered gently, "and shall consider your feelings. Still, my child, you must remember their anxiety. They love you; your words have proved that. Then what must they not be enduring all this time? You have been in our care for a week, and were four days alone before that. You must let me go to Dr. Strong. He shall not see you, he shall not even know your whereabouts - only he shall learn that you are safe and in good hands."

Ulrica sat silent as he ceased. How she longed at that instant to see Guy, to feel his handclasp and hear his kind voice! And yet, to do that would be to deepen her suffering, for it would but bring her nearer to Sir John Dunworthy, whom she must never see - never think of again.

Then Dr. Drewitt's words went slowly, but surely to her heart. must not be selfish in her grief. It was ingratitude - it was worse, it was cruel to keep Guy in suspense.

Mrs. Drewitt watched her face, across which flitted the various emotions

caused by her struggle.

"Well, dear?" she said gently.

Ulrica gave a quick, broken sigh. "Yes," she breathed hurriedly, "it is only right. Go to him; but — but I cannot see them — I cannot; it would break my heart. Oh, sir — oh, dear Mrs. Drewitt, you have been so good to me, help me still a little further. Give me some work, away from here, in some place where I shall be lost, and known to no one. I must escape from that man, for if he finds me, he will make me leave you and go with him; and then the disgust, the shame, the horror of it! No, no; I dare not even think of it!"

"Be comforted," Dr. Drewitt spoke gently; "we will take care of you

to the last extent in our power. Will we not, my wife?"

"As our own child," was Mrs. Drewitt's answer. Ulrica tried to speak, to thank them; but the flood of emotion in her breast choked her words in the utterance, and hurriedly rising, she went from the room.

"To see me!" exclaimed Guy, looking up from the letter he was writing to his mother. She was quite ill through distress, and it went to his heart to write her the daily record of disappointment and pain that was his lot. "A clergyman, Gryce, did you say? Show him in."

There was a flush on his worn face; a ray of hope had darted into his

breast.

As Dr. Drewitt entered the apartment, he went forward hurriedly, saying almost involuntarily, urged he scarcely knew by what feellings:

"You have come from Ulrica - you know of her?"

The vicar held out his hand and Guy clasped it; a mutual thought of liking and trust came into their minds.

"Yes; I know of her. She is safe and well."

Guy's answer was to turn away and bend his head on his folded arms on the mantel-piece. He could not speak at first, the relief was too great. Dr. Drewitt respected his silence; he stood quietly bytill the other moved round again.

"Forgive me," said Guy huskily, "but I have suffered so much since she

went. I am --- "

"I understand," observed the vicar, taking the chair Guy pushed forward.

"Tell me all."

Dr. Drewitt sighed a little.

"It is a story of woe and sorrow too heavy for that young heart," he began sadly, and then he went slowly through all Ulrica's misery.

Guy started as though he had been struck a blow at the mention of her marriage; he had listened in a quiet, eager way to all that went before. "Married!" he exclaimed, in a voice full of anguish. "And to him!"

"I regret from my heart that I did not allow my doubt to prevail. But Mott was prepared on every side, and his plausible tale of her father's death, and her consequent grief, disarmed me. Her face haunted me through the day. I could not push it from me, and when I came across her lying fainting just beside this very hotel, I knew my misgivings had been too well founded, and there was some wrong to be discovered. She was ill for nearly four days, but is now stronger, though my wife shakes her head over the girl's lovely worn face."

Guy passed his hand over his eyes, then said very unsteadily:

"I must go to her at once."

Dr. Drewitt looked grave and pained. "She entreated me to prevent you."

"She does not want to see me!" Guy said quietly. Then he broke out passionately: "Oh, Ulrica, Ulrica! if you had but trusted me—if you had but known!" Then his passion went; he crossed his arms across his breast and went on: "I can never thank you enough for coming. We must consider what is best to be done for her in every way."

"Can we annul the marriage? She is a minor," suggested Dr.

Drewitt.

Guy shook his head.

"She is under twenty, but she has no guardian appointed by law. I have no power to do it. Sam Loudon might have done so, but he is dead."

"Then, if Mott finds her, she will be compelled to go with him."

Guy nodded his head.

"I fear so."

"My wife hoped that coercion by threats might be of some value."

"Again Guy shook his head.

"Useless, for she was married of her own free will."

Dr. Drewitt was silent.

"There is only one way," Guy said after a while, still speaking in a set mechanical way, "and that is to keep her hidden from him, if possible. Tell her she must consent to see me. You, a clergyman of a parish, must not lay yourself open to any chance of scandal, which Mott would most assuredly bring if he gets a clew to her whereabouts. I will accept all the responsibility. I will take her away, and keep her with proper guardians, for a time, at least."

"And after!"
Guy sighed.

"It is a terrible dilemma - for her, poor child, a miserable one."

"I want to find this Sir Geoffrey Denvil, and also the priest. The memory of her father's suppposed crime is beyond her altogether."

Guy looked into the fire for a few moments.

"It may be true," he said at last, almost reluctantly; "yet I trust not. Certainly the circumstances of poor Mrs. Messenger's death were to me curious. I attended her for six months before she died. She had heart-disease, but there was no doubt to me that some strong mental shock or excitement hastened her end."

"There were no marks of violence?" asked Dr. Drewitt eagerly.

"None," answered Guy.

His face had grown more wan and gray as the conversation went on; it looked now prematurely old.

They were in a sitting-room away from Sir John's apartments, and so

secure from interruption.

Yet, though none but themselves were in the room, a third person overheard them, and that third person was a woman, who, crouched down beside the door, listened with an eagerness that made her limbs quiver.

It was Connie Wren.

She had learned casually from Gryce that a strange clergyman had asked for Dr. Strong, and, with all her shrewdness, jumped at the conclusion that some news had come of Ulrica.

She turned cold and sick at the thought.

Was she to be the witness, after all, of this girl's triumph, and see her own plans fail just as hope was growing brighter and brighter every day?

She stood for a second plunged into an abyss of jealous fear, then felt

she could not stand the suspense any longer.

She left her own room, and stole down the passage to the one used by

Guy. Fortune was in her favor.

There was a second entrance and a short passage to this room, and here in the dark, with one eye on the corridor outside and both ears turned on the voices within, crouched Connie.

Every now and then she lost the thread, but she heard enough to bring the color to her cheeks, and the light to her eyes, and when Dr. Drewitt, after a long sentence, uttered the words which crushed Guy's heart with their hideous meaning: "She is Horace Mott's wife—I married them myself," it was all she could do to prevent herself from crying her joy aloud.

Her lips curved into a triumphant smile; her hands unceremoniously

grasped themselves together as she listened on.

Not one single sympathetic thought did she bestow on Ulrica's broken heart and misery; she dreamt only of her own glory, which would rise immediately from the grave of this girl's lost happiness and wrecked life.

Dr. Drewitt talked long and earnestly to Guy, their manner businesslike. To an unenlightened listener, Guy might have seemed cold, almost hard, but Connie knew right well that his indifference came from the flood of agitation and the agony of pain he was enduring.

She frowned even at this.

"What is there in her, puny thing, that should make them love her?" was her jealous thought, as she remembered Guy's apathy as regarded herself.

At last the vicar rose to go, and then the anguish in Guy's heart broke

into his voice.

"I must see her," he said—"I must; when she is suffering as she is now, she wants none but friends around her. Tell her she shall be safe; I will pledge myself to secrecy; but entreat her to let me come for my mother's sake, and for the sake of her old childish love for Uncle Guy."

Dr. Drewitt wrung his hand.

"I will do all I can. That is my name—Drewitt, St. Paul's Vicarage; it is a most unfashionable neighborhood, near King's Cross—Netherlandroad. My wife would be glad to see you, I know, if we can win the child's consent."

Connie glided away as the door opened, and Guy ushered out the Vicar. She was far distant, thinking out her plans, as the two men parted.

"Mott run over—taken to his rooms—ill! Well, if he were dying he would be revenged on her, or else I am very much mistaken. Let me see. What is his address? Fool that I am! I must remember it—I must. I knew it well."

## CHAPTER XX.

DOWN in the empty sitting-room sat Guy, his face buried in his hands. "Gone—lost to me forever! Oh, Ulrica, my darling! the one creature who makes life for me. I would have spared you every pain, and now—"

He rose after a while and paced the floor.

"Now," he mused, "all I can do is to shield you with all my care and might from this man. Coward—reptile! Oh, that I could have killed him before he ruined her life! But, with God's help, she shall be kept from him. It may be a crime against the law of man, but it is only justice due to her weakness and her broken heart."

Little did he think that while he pondered and arranged this, a message was fleeing to Horace Mott, who, with his arm bound up, his face cut and discolored, was still able to rise from his chair, a triumph glowing in his eyes, as he read the words: "Go to St. Paul's Vicarage, Netherland-road,

King's Cross, N. You will find your wife there. This from a friend who has discovered all."

He tossed the telegram onto a table.

"A friend," he laughed as his quick eye took in the mark of the office from which the telegram had been dispatched. "A friend indeed, Miss Constance Wren. Well, I am indebted to you. My wife and I have a score to settle, and it shall be done surely, quickly."

Ulrica listened to Dr. Drewitt's account of his meeting with Guy in silence. Every word went to her heart. Guy's appeal to let her see him, his sorrow, his anger against Mott, and lastly, his offer to take her to some secure remote spot, sank into her breast with a sensation of passing pleasure and faint comfort.

She had never really doubted Guy, even when the thought of her father's crime had been most terrible, and this proof of his great goodness was like

heavenly dew to her poor blighted heart.

Still she hesitated.

Could she bear to see him, hear him speak of that one who was as a sun to her existence. She had not even dared to open her lips to ask Dr. Drewitt how Sir John progressed, though her every nerve thrilled to know the worst.

The vicar read her white agitated face well, and in gentle words told her of the improvement in the sick man's condition, as tenderly as though she had been his own child.

When he had finished, Ulrica still sat silent, her hands lying nerveless on

her lap.

"Give me till to-morrow," she said faintly, lifting her eyes at last. "I

- I cannot send Uncle Guy an answer now."

"Wise maiden," observed the vicar, speaking briskly. "Always take a night to solve a difficulty; things look so differently by morning's light. Now I wonder if you feel equal to coming with us this evening to a 'working man's concert?'"

Mrs. Drewitt shook her head.

"I don't think I can permit it, Alan," she remarked. "I must still exercise some little control over my invalid; she will be infinitely better here by the fire."

Ulrica smiled a wan little smile.

"I don't feel very strong," she said, "or I should like to go. Give me

something to do. I can sew."

"Can you?" laughed the vicar's wife, determining to dismiss all sad topics, at all events for a little while. "Then, indeed, I will give you employment. I would stay with you to-night, but Alan gets into a complete fog without me—don't you now? Confess, sir."

"I do confess it, without a blush," was the prompt reply. "You have some good points. Playing an accompaniment to a song is one of them. We shall have to see what this young lady knows of music, Agnes, before

long."

Mrs. Drewitt acquiesced as she brought out a pile of sewing and sorted

among it for some small article to give Ulrica.

"I used to sing," the girl said, gazing into the fire with her lustrous eyes dimmed.

"And shall again," observed the older woman briskly.

Ulrica rose, and taking one of Mrs. Drewitt's hands, bent and kissed it.

"How can I ever repay you?" she whispered brokenly. "How good you both are —how good!"

The vicar cleared his throat, and Mrs. Drewitt drew the girl for an

instant into a tender embrace.

"Once upon a time, Ulrica," she said, "I had a child of my own. There are some troubles, dear, that never grow old. Her loss is one. But since you have been with me, somehow the grief has been eased in my heart, and I have been happy; so you see, my child, you do repay me in this sweet

They stood clasped together for a while, and the vicar went gently from

the room; then Mrs. Drewitt smiled and released Ulrica.

"I am going to make you comfortable," she said brightly. "Here is some work, and here is a delightful book. I suppose it is terrible for a clergyman's wife to own to a taste for novels. Well, I do—so don't be shocked. Sit here close to the fire. Ring for anything. Barlow will look after you. Poor Barlow! she has been with me for years and years, and she is quite distressed about your pale face. If you are tired before we come back - it may be eleven o'clock - go to your little bed. Sleep is the best thing for your young brain and heart."

And, with a few more gentle words and a parting kiss, Mrs. Drewitt departed, to put on her bonnet and mantle, and accompany her husband.

They both popped in their heads to bid the girl good-night, in case she should grow weary before they returned.

Then Ulrica heard the front door close, and she was alone.

She lay back in her cozy chair and gazed into the fire, thinking over Guy's message and all the love he bestowed on her.

What must she do? That was the one burning thought in her brain.

She recognized to the full the pain Guy would suffer at her refusal to see him; yet much as she longed to do that, great as would be the pleasure of his presence — the presence of a staunch, true friend, still her heart failed

But about nine o'clock a circumstance came that aroused Ulrica of her-

The front door bell rang sharply and decisively, and at the sound the girl awoke, her heart beating wildly, and her pulses thrilling in a vague way that unconsciously distressed her, though why she knew not.

She heard Barlow go to the door, though, as a rule, a younger maid

admitted strangers.

She heard the sound of a voice, and then she heard Barlow come to the drawing-room, and turn the handle.

"If you please, miss, there's a person wishes to see you; he has brought

a message from the master, he says - a note or something."

There was just the faintest tone of vexation in Barlow's voice; she was so used to knowing all her master's and mistress' doings, this sending a note to Ulrica unconsciously pained her.

Ulrica was quick to see it.

"There must be some mistake, Barlow," she said gently. "I expect the note is to you."

Barlow was pacified at once; and then a thought came into her mind that perhaps this was, after all, private business of Ulrica's own.

"I'll go and see again, miss," she said.

Ulrica bent and stroked the cat; the beating in her heart had died away.

What more natural than that one of her kind benefactors should require something?

Barlow entered with a note bearing every evidence of hasty dispatch in

its small, rather crushed envelope.

Ulrica took it, and then she knew her vague surmises had been but too terribly well-founded.

She turned her face from the old servant, and opened the note with

cold, trembling fingers.

"I have found you; see me without delay. I am in no mood to be trifled with, or be refused. If you do intend to take this line, I warn you that I will expose this clergyman who is giving you shelter, and separating you from your lawful nusband. Details your answer.

I do not intend to keep. I am waiting your answer. "HORACE MOTT.". you from your lawful husband. Believe me, Ulrica, I never utter a threat

Ulrica shivered against herself, all her courage fled "I never utter a threat I do not intend to keep."

What could that mean but that her lover might still be in danger, and she would bring shame and disgrace on these good people who had rescaed her?

She still kept her face turned away from Barlow.

"Send - send the person in," she managed to say, though her voice "He-I know him, Barlow; he wishes to see me."

"Then the master does not want anything himself?" asked Barlow, sat-

isfied that her idea was right.

"No," murmured Ulrica.

Barlow withdrew, and Ulrica stood as still as a statue.

A slight noise at the door made her turn, and there, disguised in a long, shabby overcoat, with the smile she had grown to hate and fear on his lips, was her husband.

He moved slowly toward the fire with a limping, halting gait, and then

gazed at her, still smiling.

"Only one thing wanted—a husband to finish the picture. tunately I can supply that commodity."

Ulrica unconsciously shrank from him.

"Yes; I am afraid my coat is shabby," he observed, remarking ner action, and pretending to misunderstand it; "but you see I am compelled to adopt a disguise to obtain an audience with my own wife. Strange, is it not? but quite true."

"What do you want with me?" broke from Ulrica's pale tips.

He laughed again.

"Well, I want so many things. First and foremost, some one to be a companion and a nurse to me. You see the result of your doings. I am little more than an invalid at present, I regret to say."

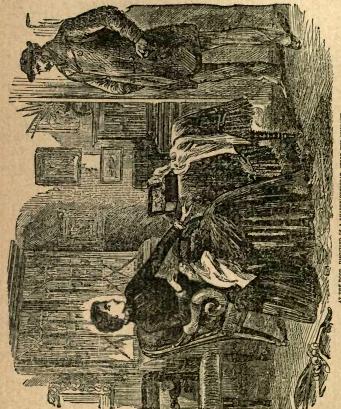
Ulrica took a quick breath; she would make a strong effort before she

condemned herself forever.

"I have nothing to say to you. I have no desire to see you. If you are ill through my doings I am sorry, but I cannot pretend to feel the smallest interest in your welfare. Your sufferings can never approach those you have caused me. There is no law to compel me to live with you,

"Your legal knowledge is undoubted, of course," he interrupted, quietly.

"A marriage forced upon me by unmanly threats is no marriage, in my eyes," Ulrica continued hurriedly.



ALIAK DOOR, DISGUISED IN A SILIDEL DYERSOAL STOOD HER HUSBAND,

"Your eyes are not the optics of the law."

She took no notice of the remark given with an air of maddening indif-

ference.

"I refuse to recognize it. You have behaved throughout as only a coward and villain would have done. You lied to me about my father.

"Now, how did you discover that?," demanded Mott, in a quiet, sur-

prised way.

"Then—then it was not true? He did not murder my——" The

words died away.

"I believe your late father had many crimes on his soul," Mott observed slowly; "but that he was guilty of murder I think is a cruel calumny."

"And yet you --- "

Ulrica got no further; she sank into the chair and buried her face in her hands, stunned by this truth - this awful truth that had destroyed her life; but for this man's lies she would even now be basking in the sun-shine of love and happiness! The blow was too heavy.

"Come," said her husband in a drawling way, "don't be so weak.

When I informed you of your father's supposed sin, you bore it like a lion, and now ——"

The girl made no movement.

He watched her silently while the clock ticked almost five minutes, and the cat rose and walked slowly to the door.

Then he changed.

"Now," he said, sharply, "get your things on; I am tired, and want to get home."

"I am not going with you," Ulrica answered, raising her head.

"No? Well, that is curious; but I think you will." She met his dark eyes, and, against herself, shuddered.

"You, perhaps, did not read my note carefully?" he went on. "Then I must explain it. You remember the threat I used so successfully before you honored me by becoming my wife? Ah, I thought so. Well, allow me to point out that, unless you are my wife in deed, and as such obey the vows you spoke, that threat still holds good. I am desperate, Ulrica; don't tempt me, for by heaven, I swear, if you do, John Dunworthy's life is not worth a button!"

She clutched the chair for support. The words were not spoken hotly or passionately, but in a cold, set, savage way, that struck a chill in her

"More than that," continued Horace Mott, quietly, "this man and his wife are outraging the law when they give you shelter and take you from the lawful protection of your husband. Hesitate only one instant, and I will disgrace them. A clergyman's position is a delicate one. I have but to breathe this scandal in his parish, and you will have the satisfaction of seeing your benefactors covered with shame before all the world."

Ulrica was silent, motionless, as he ceased; every syllable, every word,

struck home.

She felt, she knew this was true—that if she refused to go with this man she must drag the vicar and his wife into a very quagmire of scandal and disgrace. It was enough; she could not repay their goodness to her thus, even though in preventing it she sacrificed herself.

"You have won," she said, cold as ice. "Once before I remarked that warfare with you was impossible. You have me in your power, but though you can command me as your slave, you cannot enange my neart; in that lives a flame of love for John Dunworthy which no act or word of yours could dim for a moment, and side by side with it a flood of bitter hatred, disgust, and contempt for yourself which will remain till I am dead."

Mott leaned carelessly against the mantel-piece.

"He laughs loudest who laughs last," he remarked with a sneer. "You are mine, and if you imagine such a flood of hysterical, ultra-sentimental rubbish as that will have any effect upon me - well, you are mistaken, that is all."

Ulrica moved to the writing-table.

Disgust for this man gave her a new air of imperious dignity.

"There is very little that would have effect upon such a nature as yours except a horsewhip," she said, contemptuously.

Mott flushed crimson, unconsciously he took a step nearer. "Take care, Ulrica!" he said, huskily.

She laughed a sharp, mirthless laugh.
"I am not afraid. I shall be prepared for blows; slaves must expect them — well, let them come, they may hasten the end; if so, they will be welcome."

Horace Mott gazed at her.

He did not know her in this wild, reckless mood.

Ulrica passed one hand over her burning eyes, then seated herself at the writing-table, and took up the pen.

She had a task to perform.

The vicar and his wife must know where she had gone, but not why; she would not let them defy this man, and so bring disgrace upon them.

"Dear Good Friends," she wrote — "My husband has found me; he requests me to leave your house at ouce, and as I have no alternative but to comply, I am going accordingly. May God in heaven bless you for all your goodness to me! I shall never forget you, and, through all, always remember that a flood of gratitude and love lives in the heart of

"ULRICA MOTT."

She wrote the words steadily and boldly; there was no hesitation abou. it, even when she inscribed the hateful letters of her new name.

She was changed from a weak trembling girl to a woman, strong, as it

were, with an iron nerve and resolution.

"Wait here," she said, putting the note on the table. "I will fetch my cloak and hat."

She went mechanically up-stairs.

Barlow was dozing in her little sitting-room and did not hear her. The other servants had gone to the concert.

She wrapped her cloak round her, fastened her shoes, and putting on

her hat, went slowly from the room.

She did not look to the right or to the left, but descended the stairs in the same set fashion, and then stood in the doorway of the drawing-room.

For one instant the contrast between its warm cozy light and the gloom and cold outside that but foreshadowed her future life, brought a shudder through her, but it was only for a moment.

"I am ready," she said to Horace Mott.

With a sharp glance at her, he buttoned his coat tightly round him, and

went to the entrance.

A fine rain was falling, and Ulrica shivered again, but her carriage was steady, her face pale and set, as she followed her husband down to the stepts into the night.

# CHAPTER XXI.

HE loud peal of the bell rang through the house. Guy waited impatiently on the doorstep while the echoes died faintly away. As the latch clicked back, he spoke hastily:

"Mr Horace Mott has rooms here?"

The servant looked surprised at his impatience.

"He had, sir," he answered, "up to an hour ago. He has lived here, on and off, for several years, but this evening he paid up his rent, and told my wife she could rent his rooms whenever she liked. He's gone abroad, I think, sir."

Guy was silent, crushed by this last blow.

"Was he alone?" he asked after a moment's pause, speaking in a harsh,

constrained voice.

"No, sir; he took his wife with him. We didn't even know as how he was married till he was carried home here after his accident, and they said as how they'd found the marriage certificate in his pocket. He told us he were going away for a while."

"Did you see Mrs. Mott?"

"Yes, sir; very young and beautiful she were, but she looked awful ill like."

"Did Mr. Mott leave his address?"

The man shook his head.

"Any letters what comes we're to forward to his bankers."

"I suppose Ul—Mrs. Mott left no message?"

"None, sir. I don't think Mrs. Mott opened her lips once, sir - in fact, I'm sure she didn't."

"But there is no train to Dover at this time of night."

"Well, sir, I don't know nothing about that. They druv away from here, sir, at eleven o'clock precisely, sir. I don't know which way they went." Guy buttoned his coat round his neck. He slipped a sovereign into the

man's hand.

"Thank you," he said, quietly. "I am afraid I have given you a lot of trouble." "No trouble, sir, at all. Only sorry you arrived so late. If I see or hear

anything of Mr. Mott or the lady, sir, shall I let you know?" Guy pondered, and then agreed.

"That is my card. A telegram there will always find me."

The door was closed, and the servant pocketed the sovereign, then mounted to his attic, having looked once again that all the various articles deposited on the hall-table were ready for the occupants of the numerous flats or chambers.

"Strange go altogether," he mused, rubbing his chin. "Well, it ain't

my business, though I ain't done badly by it so far."

Guy drove back through the streets, empty save for the carriages and cabs bearing many a dainty lady and cavalier from theatre to ball or home, the occasional passenger hurrying through the cold night air, and the stalwart policemen standing like sentries at the street-corners.

"And this is the end!" he mused with sad bitterness. "It was for this

I sacrificed myself, tore up my love at the roots, endured the misery I have

endured, only to see my darling lost, wretched - her happiness gone forever! Well, I am punished for my presumption. I set myself up to mark out her life, to give her nothing but peace and gladness, and my work has been destroyed. Oh, Ulrica - Ulrica! my one love, my pure white flower, would that I had died before this came to you and wrecked your young

But now there remained nothing but to tell the truth - an undertaking

from which Guy shrank with a heart full of pain.

He entered Sir John's room early.

"What news, Strong?" was the eager question put so regularly. "Is there any?"

Guy hesitated a moment, then said very gently and slowly:

"Yes, Jack, there is news. It is not good."

"Not good!" repeated the young man, raising himself with his elbow on his pillow, and speaking in a low, husky voice. "Go on, old fellow. I am no coward; I can bear the worst. Ulrica is — is dead!"

"Dead to you," was the answer. "Jack, she is parted from you forever;

she is Horace Mott's wife!"

" What!"

The one word was uttered shrilly.

Sir John's face grew crimson; his right hand was clenched.

He seemed paralyzed for an instant; then the color faded slowly but surely from his worn cheeks; his fingers relaxed, and, with a gasp, he sank back onto his pillows.

Guy bent over him with the tenderness of a woman.

"It is too much for him," he murmured to himself.
But John Dunworthy's ears were closed. Weakened by anxiety and illness, Guy's words struck his heart as with a blow, and, as the horrible meaning came to him, he sank back, lost mercifully for the moment in a dead faint.

Connie Wren had not a pleasant time with Lady Dunworthy.

She had promised Sir John that his mother should not be with him alone, and that the subject of Ulrica should not be mentioned in his presence, and for the sake of her own plans she had to work this, but it was a very difficult task.

Lady Dunworthy posed as an injured mother. She was disagreeable to a degree. She refused to see Guy at all, accusing him, in her narrowminded way, of all that had occurred, and she worried Connie almost past endurance by her tactless remarks whenever she appeared at her son's

bedside.

The night of the afternoon that had brought Dr. Drewitt to the Langham was passed by Connie in a nervous, excited way. She had dispatched the telegram to Mott herself, and then had to sit down quietly and wait the result.

She could scarcely sleep for her agitation, and as morning broke over the city, she rose and dressed rapidly, determined to go to Guy and, if pos-

sible, learn what had happened.

She found her entrance to Sir John's room barred by Gryce.

"Dr. Strong said Sir John is not to be disturbed. He has had a bad night."

Connie bit her lips.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Where is Dr. Strong?" she asked.

"In the coffee-room having some breakfast, I fancy."

Connie swept away.

As she entered the coffee-room she found Guy, and seated beside him her sister Chattie and Basil Morne.

She greeted Chattie with little warmth, for in her heart she was annoyed to see her.

"What brings you here?" she asked taking another chair, after shaking hands with Basil.

"You," said Chattie laconically.

Guy noted Connie's frown.

"Your mother is ill, Connie, and wants you," he said.

Connie almost stamped her foot.

"Mamma has always got something the matter with her," she declared. "What good can I do?"

"We have heard so much of your nursing propensities, my dear," Chattie observed quietly, though there was a sparkle of anger and contempt in her green-gray eyes, "that we are anxious to put them to the test. You could not devote yourself to a better case than your own mother."

Chattie attacked a piece of bacon violently, and Connie felt she could

have willingly struck her sister.

"I can't come till the afternoon," she said sharply. "I presume you have sent for mamma's doctor?"

"Yes," was Chattie's laconic reply.

"And she has Margaret and you to nurse her," went on Connie. "What more does she want?

"She has the bad taste to be fond of you, and now, when she is ill, looks for some small return for all the sacrifices she has made for you."

Chattie spoke almost passionately; tears were in her eyes.

Basil's color rose, and he began to whistle, and Guy, who had sunk into a partial reverie, looked up now.

"Chattie, dear," he said gently. " Well, Uncle Guy -

Chattie got no further; she bit her lip, and went on cutting her bacon fiercely.

Connie smiled sneeringly.

"Pray, who brought you here so early this morning, may I ask, Chattie?" Basil stopped short in his whistle.

"You may. I did," was the remark.

"Well, I think, on the whole, it is a good thing I am coming home; it is very evident mamma's illness is a very excellent excuse for Chattie to indulge her every whim."

"You are quite wrong," Basil answered, meeting her gaze with his handsome eyes. "Your mother not only knows Chattie is with me, but sanctions it; Mrs. Wren cannot be left alone, or Margaret would have accompanied your sister "

"Who is much obliged for your kind consideration," broke in Chattie; then, turning to Guy, she continued hurriedly and eagerly: " Please go on, Uncle Guy; you did not answer my question. What about Ulrica?'

Guy gave a quick sigh.

"Ulrica has been found, but," he added quickly, as Chattie began softly

to clasp her hands - " but she is lost to us again."

"What do you mean?" cried Chattie and Basil in one breath. Connie made no sign, but her heart was beating to suffocation. In a few broad words, spoken in tones of concentrated emotion, Guy

told all he knew of Ulrica.

"Married! Married to Horace Mott!" replied Chattie. "Oh, Uncle Guy, there must be some mistake!"

Basil sat astounded.

## CHAPTER XXII.

SUMMER once again—warm, bright, golden summer-time. The trees rustled their new garments of fresh green leaves. The air murmured lazily beneath their branches; the sky beamed blue through its filmy laces of white clouds; and earth rejoiced that winter's black ban and spring's uncertain touch were banished in the summer sun.

The Park was filled with a throng of fashionable riders, carriages and pedestrians, whose dainty-hued garments seemed like so many butterflies

flitting against the green back-ground.

Three or four equestrians were grouped beneath a clump of trees about the center of the Row, talking to several damsels and their cavaliers, who were among the strollers to and tro.

One of the two girls on horseback was reining in her steed with difficulty,

while she talked to a tall, good-looking man.

She had a svelte graceful young figure, with a piquant pretty face smiling under her orthodox riding-hat, which could not hide the radiance of deep red hair coiled neatly in the nape of the neck.

"You were very unkind last night, Miss Chattie," the man was saying. Chattie laughed, and then one saw how little she was really changed, though she was nearly six months older, and had spent all that time in the world, for she had come out and was now a young lady of fashion.

"Was I, Lord Eric? I assure you I did not mean it. What did I do?"
"You refused to listen to me, after I had waited all the evening, too, for

that opportunity."

"Had you anything important to say?" inquired the girl, bending to stroke the neck of her horse, speaking rather constrainedly.

Lord Eric Moseley glanced round at the group near at hand, but they

were deep in a conversation and could not hear.

"I think you know what I wanted to say, Chattie—don't you?"

Chattie's face flushed.

"I guess now," she answered, quickly; "but, dear Lord Eric, you must

not say it. I thought you knew I am engaged to Basil Morne."

The young man said nothing at first. He looked down on the ground and buried his stick in the soft turf; then, after a moment's silence, he lifted his head, and said quietly:

"Yes; I remember you told me; but when I spoke to your sister she

laughed at it as so much nonsense."

"Connie had no right to do that," Chattie said, warmly, feeling pained and annoyed. "Believe me, Lord Eric, I would have spared you this."

Lord Eric gazed into her green-gray eyes, so earnest, and to him so bewitching.

"I believe you from my heart!"

Then they were silent again once more, and Chattie let her gaze wander in her troubled thought over the sea of passing faces till it rested on a woman standing quite close—a shabby, middle-aged woman, with an old

shawl drawn round her shoulders, and her eyes fixed with a strange, eager

search on every horseman that passed.

Chattie was beginning to wonder in her mind what such a poor, sadlooking creature wanted in a crowd so gay as this, when Lord Eric broke

"I am thinking of going off on my travels once more, Miss Chattie."

"When will you go? Not until after Goodwood, of course?"

He smiled a little.

"To tell you the honest truth, the London season bores me to such an extent, I am always glad to curtail it. I should not have remained so long already but for certain circumstances."

Chattie flushed a little with pained annoyance; again she understood what it meant, and could not help feeling bitter with Connie for putting

her in so false a position.

Lord Eric went on quickly:

"I never told you, did I, Miss Chattie, that I knew all about you before I ever saw you? I met some one abroad who sang your praises so warmly they won my heart."

"That must have been Jack - Sir John Dunworthy, I suppose?" Chattie

said, looking puzzled.

"Indeed no. It was a lady — a beautiful young lady whom I happened to meet in the most casual way when last in Paris."

"A lady!" repeated Chattie, still puzzled.

Lord Eric laughed.

"I see you will never guess - so I must tell you it was a Mrs. Horace

Mott. Do you ---"

But two interruptions came at this instant, one from Chattie, who started, and then murmured: "Ulrica! you have seen her?" and one from the shabby woman, who was turning and gazing at them fixedly, her worn face grown a shade paler.

Lord Eric did not notice her, and Chattie's excitement at hearing Ulrica's name mentioned at last, drove everything around her from her mind.

"Ulrica!" she said again. "Lord Eric, she was my dearest friend. Oh, tell me where she is - what she is doing. Is she looking well? Oh, how beautiful she was - my poor Ulrica!"

Lord Eric looked at the flushed young face with sympathetic surprise. "She is indeed lovely," he agreed; "but what a sad face! She seldom smiles, and I am told rarely speaks to strangers, so that I may consider myself honored in so much as she seemed to like chatting with me."

"And did she speak often of me?" asked Chattie eagerly.

"No; your name was not mentioned till the very last day we met; then I spoke of coming to town, and somehow, among other things, your sister's name was mentioned, and then it was that her cold indifference vanished, and she spoke of you as the angel you are." Chattie took no notice of the last compliment.

"Lord Eric," she said hurriedly, "tell me more—what is she doing,

and where is he - that horrible man?"

"They were in Paris, as I told you. Mott had some heavy speculations on hand, I believe; anyhow his rooms were thronged with stockbrokers, rich, vulgar moneyed men, among whom his wife looked like a flower of a different world. She told me they never rested long in one place, and might leave that very night for London, which as a matter of fact they did."

The woman by the rails had drawn nearer and nearer, till she almost touched Lord Eric's sleeve, but still Chattie and he were so deep in their subject that she was unnoticed. -

"London!" repeated Chattie anxiously; "then if she is here I must see her. Lord Eric, you have done many kind, little actions for me; will you do me another? Find out where Ulrica - Mrs. Mott is now, and let me know."

"I shall be able to do so very easily," said the young man warmly, "for Mott is a man who will soon make his whereabouts known. You do not

like him, Miss Chattie?"

"Like him!" cried the girl; "he is a villain and contemptible cur!" Then she added more gently: "Some day, perhaps, I will tell you why I

say this; and you will agree with me, I know."

"If he has injured his wife, indeed I shall, for I fell a desperate victim to her. She interested me strangely - it was so beautiful, so young a face, and yet all hope, all joy of living, seemed dead; she made one sad to look at her. I thought it disgust for her husband's surroundings—for, you know, Mott is famous for his gambling propensities; he always turns his house into a small establishment which, if discovered by law, would be liable to bring him into great trouble."

"And he has dragged Ulrica into this!" murmured Chattie, tightening her rein in her indignation. "Lord Eric, more than ever I must see her!

Ch, how I wish I knew where she was at this moment."

Lord Eric was glancing into the crowd.

"I think I may be able to gratify that wish, Miss Chattie," he said hur-

"Will you excuse me for one minute?"

He darted away, and Chattie sat on in a fever of impatience, while the woman at the rails stood with one thin work-stained hand grasping the iron bar as if for support.

Connie, seeing her sister's cavalier depart, turned round.

"Come, Chattie," she remarked in her most approved drawling fashion, "if you are ready to go. I am sure Uncle Mark must be tired of waiting."

"Uncle Mark" was their mother's brother, who always accompanied them in their daily rides.

"I am not ready," Chattie answered curtly.

Connie settled herself more comfortably in her saddle.

"State secrets with Lord Eric," she laughed, though in her heart she was jealous of her sister's undoubted social success.

"Have you heard the news, Miss Wren?" broke in a young soldier from

the path, eager to be seen talking to the two pretty "Wrens.

"Something startling?" inquired Connie languidly.

"Only that Dunworthy is back in England. Saw him myself half an hour ago."

Connie's fair cheeks flushed.

This was news indeed - news she had grown tired of waiting for; but no sign of her pleasure was visible in her voice as she said:
"And where is this most remiss wanderer?"

"I believe he is in town now, but he told me he should not stay long; he meant to go direct to Dunworthy Castle."

Connie's heart beat fast.

This was the first visit to his home since the affair about Ulrica. It augured well that he was cured, she told herself.

Chattie heard all, but made no sign. She was thinkly sadly about the girl whom she had loved so dearly.

"What would I not give to be able to send Jack direct to her, and let all

her sorrows end!" she mused.

Lord Eric came back at this moment.

"Eureka!" he whispered. "Draycott saw Mott last night. They are staying in town; he can't quite remember where, but he thinks somewhere on Brompton-road. He is going to find out, and you shall know immediately he does so."

Chattie put out her small hand. There were two tears in her eyes.

"You have given me great pleasure, Lord Eric," she said. "Au revoir,

and thank you."

Lord Eric murmured something; Connie and Chattie, with their uncle and his son, bowed farewell and rode slowly away to luncheon, leaving the poor weman standing by the rails, as if some magnetic influence held her

Her face was white, and her eyes fixed with a strange look straight before

"At last," she breathed through her pale lips—"at last, Horace Mott, my hour has come! I shall be avenged!"

## CHAPTER XXIII.

IIIHL day had been intensely hot, and as night came on the sky clouded as though it would end in a fitful storm of thunder and rain.

In a room well lit with shaded lamps, filled with an atmosphere of tobaccosmoke, and loud with the babble of voices that rose from the men clustered

round the card-tables, sat a woman.

She was close to the long open window, from which could be caught a glimpse of a dingy square, with dusty trees and brown grass in the center. The very faint breeze that moved the lace curtains caressed the soft tendrils of hair that grew on her brows, and fluttered the lace gathered at her neck.

She held some work in her hand. But her whole attention was turned from the hot noisy room to the still sultry night outside. She gazed at the occasional passengers sauntering along in easy fashion, with a yearning

look on her lovely face that filled one with sorrow to see.

It was Horace Mott's wife — the girl he had so shamelessly deceived and forced into marriage, beautiful as of yore, but how changed! There was not the suspicion of a smile on the sweet lips or in the star-like eyes; it was the face of a woman who had no hope, no joy in life - nothing but endurance.

She shuddered as the conversation rose sometimes to a shout, often

terminating in an oath.

The man who should have offered her protection from such insults sat by, with his sneering smile on his face, indifferent so it seemed even to her

very existence, except as being of exceeding value to him.

Few of the men approached Ulrica to talk with her; she had an air of such cold dignity and refinement that held them apart, though many were the whispers as to who and what Mott's wife had been, and why she should have married such a man. They knew only too well that scarcely one of themselves was fit to be in her society.

Mott, from his seat at the card-table, cast a sharp glance at her every

now and then, and frowned unpleasantly when he did so.

"It's too bad!" he muttered to himself more than once; "sitting there like a statue! By Heaven, I shall end it! She must wake up; luck is going to the deuce, and her face, if she chooses, could turn the scale. She could do it if she likes."

As he thought this the door opened, and Lord Elric appeared.

Mott greeted him effusively, but after a few words Lord Elric made his way to Ulrica's side, and drawing up a chair began to talk eagerly to her.

There was a flush on the girl's lovely face and a light in her eyes, as she saw the young man, that made her husband bite his lip with jealous rage and anger.

His life with Ulrica so far had not been a success for him.

Every command he gave, however tyrannical, she performed; she fulfilled her duties in a way that aggravated him beyond everything.

Nothing he did could rouse Ulrica; even in his passion she sat as calm

as a statue, never moving - letting his rage exhaust itself.

Alone with him, she never opened her lips or spoke to him, except on

the most ordinary trivialities of everyday life.

Bullying had no effect, and it roused him almost to the verge of madness to see this girl shrink from the very touch of his sleeve as from some hideous reptile.

He had won the game with John Dunworthy; he had wrested Ulrica

from all she loved, but there his triumph ended.

With Ulrica he never felt anything but a liar, a coward, and an utter villain.

"I have come on purpose to see you, Mrs. Mott," exclaimed Lord Eric

Moseley, as he shook Ulrica's delicate hand. "I am very glad to see you again," she replied, in her sweet, simple

"I got your address from Draycott," went on the young man, "and ca m here directly. I have a message for you from some one you like very much, Mrs. Mott."

"From - some one I like!" whispered Ulrica, fading pale as death.

"I saw Miss Chattie Wren in the Park to-day, and I told her how I had met you, and how you had spoken of her, and she entreats you to let her come and see you.

Ulrica's hands were locked together tightly.

"See me!" she repeated, agitatedly. "Oh, no - no; it must not be! Dear Chattie!"

Lord Eric looked at her face with sympathy and admiration.

"She will be greatly disappointed," he said.

Ulrica gave a short, choking sigh.
"Lord Eric, you must give Chattie my love—how poor that sounds! my heartfelt, never-altered love; but tell her she must not come to me, or try to find me. I could not bear to meet her yet."

"I will tell her so to-morrow."

Ulrica had turned her face to the window again; there was a quiver on her lips, and something glistening in her eye, and her voice trembled as

" And — and how is she looking now?"

"Chattie always will be the dearest, sweetest girl in the whole world to me." Lord Eric spoke mournfully, then went on:

"But it is of no use; she is engaged to marry Basil Morne."

" Basil!" murmured Ulrica.

In fancy she could see the boy and girl romping and laughing, teasing one another in the gardens at Bathurst, while she had sat contented in the sweet unconscious dream that was gradually stealing over her.

"They are very young," she said after a while; "but I think they will be

парру."

Then seeing the pained look on Lord Eric's face, she put out her hand gently.

"I am very sorry for you. You love her, too. I am sure you could not

help it, she is one of earth's angels."

"Oh, well, I must not be selfish; I shall grow out of it some day, I suppose." The young man spoke valiantly, but he ended in a deep sigh.

Mott, looking at them keenly from the card-table, saw their grave expressions, and the sweet look in Ulrica's eyes, when she turned to speak to Lord Eric, and a flame of hot color rushed to his brow.

"Can it be that she has grown to - Pshaw! the idea is folly! What heart she ever had is buried with that other - confound him! And yet it

might be so : women are strange creatures!"

He let them sit talking pleasantly for a while, then raised his voice :

"Play something, Ulrica, or sing — it does not matter which; only do your share to amuse our guests."

Lord Eric's right hand clenched itself unconsiously, as he saw Ulrica quiver at the insolent indifference in her husband's tone.

"May I take you to the piano?" he asked with tender courtesy.

Ulrica shook her head.

"If our guests will pardon me, I will not sing to-night," she said in her

clear, sweet voice; "the heat is so great, I --- "

A perfect chorus of assent rose at once from one and all of the men assembled; only Horace Mott's lips drew in, in a fashion unbecoming and disagreeable.

"If madame is not willing, here is some one who is!" he exclaimed, as the door opened and a man entered, spelling vulgarity in his every line.

He was one of Ulrica's daily trials; her delicate nature, her refined soul, shrank from this boon companion of Mott's, even more than it shrank from her husband himself.

"What am I wanted to do?" asked this individual, in accents that

denoted a close acquaintance with whisky. "Sing, Major," Mott said laconically.

Major Carter, as he called himself, lurched at once to the piano, and without more ado, broke into a song which brought loud laughter from Mott and some of the others, but which forced Ulrica's head to droop with shame, and Lord Eric to rise to his feet and exclaim in a loud voice:

"Stop!" Carter turned round with a drunken air of inquiry.

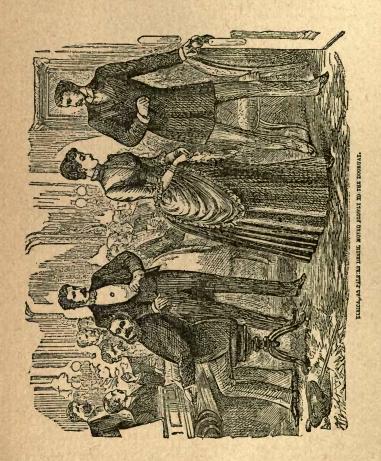
Lord Eric looked straight at his host. "Your wife is present," he said distinctly.

Mott laughed.

"Well, what of it? Ulrica is not squeamish; she has heard this sort

of thing scores of times, and will have to again, my lord."

Ulrica, as pale as death, moved slowly to the doorway, and Lord Eric hastened to open the door to let her pass. Once outside, she stood with dilated eyes and heaving breast.



"He must not be insulted for me," ran the mad thought in her mind.

She could hear distinctly what followed.

"I am exceedingly obliged to you for your careful thought of my wife, Lord Eric," said her husband in a voice choked with passion, "but I believe I am perfectly capable of doing that myself."

"You mean leave your house. I am going, but before I go I wish to express before you all, the sincere respect and sympathy I hold for Mrs. Mott."

There was another murmur of assent, in which Ulrica heard her husband grunt: "Hang your sympathy;" and then Lord Eric was standing beside her.

"Oh, thank you - thank you!" she whispered brokenly.

"Don't say that, please," urged the young man. "Mrs. Mott, do let Miss Chattie come and see you. You ought not to stay here; your

friends should --- "

"I have no friends—I can expect no help. Oh, Lord Eric, give her all my messages, tell her I think of her in my prayers every night; but she must not come—she must not. We may not meet again, you and I—let me thank you for all your great manly kindness to me; it has been so pleasant—so pleasant."

Lord Eric watched her turn away with a new mist before his eyes.

The silence was broken at last by her husband's voice shouting her name loudly.

She rose mechanically and went to the stairs.

"What is it?" she asked coldly.

"Come down - I want you."

Slowly she descended the stairs and entered the room, reeking with tobacco-smoke and hot air. Carter was stretched full length on a sofa still smoking. The rest had gone.

"Come in, can't you!" exclaimed Mott savagely as he saw the girl

recoil; "we've had enough of your infernal airs for to-night."

"What have you to say to me?" asked Ulrica, putting one hand on a

chair for support.

"Only this—that I have grown sick of your temper, and don't mean to stand any more. What do you mean by pushing that young upstart on to insult me?"

"You know I did nothing of the kind," was Ulrica's cold, steady reply.
"His own courtesy prompted him to the act. I have long ceased expecting

any respect from you."

"You will get more than ever you expected from me shortly," snarled Mott, between his teeth. "By heaven, I mean to bring you off your pedestal! You shall learn I am your master, if not by kindness, by force instead."

"You know how much effect such a threat is likely to have on me. I am

no coward!" the girl said, contemptuously.

Mott stood irresolute for an instant; then, picking up a pack of cards he

held, he flung them full in Ulrica's proud, beautiful face.

She gave one cry of horror, and put up her hand to her fair cheek, on which the blood was flowing slowly down from a cut inflicted by one sharp edge.

"You pitiful coward!" she said slowly, from between her pallid lips.

Mott uttered an oath, and lifted his hand again, but Carter flung himself forward.

"Enough of this, old man! Let her go! We may be come down, but

we ain't quite so low as striking a woman yet."

Ulrica, with one backward look of horror, went slowly from the room. She heard the two men quarreling inside, but the sound never broke her composure.

"It is the end," was her thought. "I can bear no more."

She mounted the stairs to her room once more; she seemed moved by some influence other than her own will. The insult of the blow stood before her eyes; a voice rang in her ears:

"Go—escape! Now is the time. They will drink on for hours. Go!" She stood silent for an instant; then every pulse within her leaped.

"Yes, I will go. Anywhere will be purer — will be better — than this. It is contamination to breathe the same air with him longer! I have been mad to bear it so long; I am sane now. God knows I have tried to remember the vows I took — tried to crush the hatred, the memory of his cruel deceit and trickery — to think of him as the man I had sworn to love and obey. But I can do so no longer. I will escape; it matters little where. If I die — well, death has been before me often — I am ready!"

While she thought, she was drawing a dark cloak over her dress and taking her purse with the money that had lain in it ever since the day she had taken it in exchange for her ring; she had had no need of money

before.

Slowly she stole down the stairs, her handkerchief pressed to her wounded face.

In the hall she stopped.

She heard the two men talking.

"You were a fool. I tell you Moseley was dead struck on her; and is this a moment to indulge in tomfoolery about being jealous. Jealous! why, if you have felt much love for your wife, Horace Mott, you have kept

it well hidden, my son; that's all."

"Love her," muttered Mott; "I think there is some spell about her. She drives me mad. She is my wife—I won her — Well, that's my affair. I had the satisfaction of robbing a man I hated, and for what? To be scorned—mocked at! Heavens, if you felt as I did, Carter, you would not call it tomfoolery! But there, the end must come; and, if I kill her, I will break her coldness and make her turn to me, if not of her own free will, then by mine!"

"Meanwhile, encourage Moseley. He has heaps of money, I tell you.

She must be the magnet that will draw it to our nets."

Ulrica glided on with a shudder.

She slipped open the door carefully, and then held her breath as she

closed it.

"The end must come," she repeated—"the end has come, Horace Mott! I am gone from you, pray God, forever!"

# CHAPTER XXIV.

ALL was still. The distant rumble of wheels in the thoroughfare beyond was the only sound that came to Ulrica's ears. Her strength began o fail.

It would be many weary hours till morning, and she had no shelter be-

tore her

But this was nothing—no horror at all, as she recalled what she was leaving. A sink of iniquity and shame, in which her womanhood was to be debased, her honor degraded, her beauty turned into a snare—a lure for filthy gain!

The thought revived her courage. She took a few steps to the right.

"I will walk about slowly till early dawn, then I must go to some station and wait there till—till I have made some plans. Courage, Ulrica—cou——"

The words died away in a frightened sob.

A dark object had glided away from the railings and stood in her path. It was a woman—a gaunt, haggard woman, seen in the fitful light of the lamp.

"Who are you? What do you want?" faltered Ulrica, shrinking back.

"You are Horace Mott's wife — the girl he forced, through his deceit, to marry him?"

The voice, harsh and thick as it was, sounded familiar to Ulrica.

"I am," she replied. "What of it?"

"This: You want a friend? Ah, I see it by your face. I have waited all night there to catch a glimpse of you—if possible, speak to you, but was giving it up as hopeless when you came out. Some instinct must have led me to you to-night. You want aid. Where are you going at this late hour?"

Ulrica passed a hand over her brow.

As she did so, the other caught sight of the blood on her cheek. She checked a sudden exclamation.

"Trust me. By all you hold sacred, I swear I am your friend. What are you going to do?"

"I am going to seek freedom and forgetfulness," whispered Ulrica.

The old woman drew her hand through her arm.

"And I will help you. Ah, you don't remember, child, yet your pale, pleading face has been stamped on my heart night and day. I am the woman who refused you aid when you asked for it. I am that poor, blind, besotted tool of Horace Mott's who would not listen to you. Ah, child, child, don't shrink from me! I am Graves. I have lived for this day, when I could pour out my aching heart to you, help you to the beginning of a new life, please God, and the end of all your miseries. Come home with me—come home!"

Ulrica let herself be dragged along; she was bewildered and weak.

"What does it mean?" she asked faintly.

"It means revenge!" muttered Graves; and, after a moment's pause, the young girl and the old woman passed away into the darkness together.

#### CHAPTER XXV.

MRS. WREN'S house, near Regent's Park, was little more than a cottage, but it was surrounded by a garden, both pretty and spacious, and every corner and nook of the rambling old-fashioned residence was beloved by Chattie.

Connie turned her nose up at it; her ambition soared to Dunworthy

Castle, and there was no room for sentiment in her worldly breast.

One afternoon, just before the close of the London season, when the sun was hot and brilliant, and the flowers were budding and scenting the air with their fragrance, a crowd of smartly-dressed people wended their way to Mrs. Wren's abode for a garden-party.

Connie, dainty in pink from parasol to shoe, received one and all with an air of fashionable lassitude, but beneath it her heart was throbbing

wildly and her pulses thrilling.

"Surely he will come. He must come! Lady Dunworthy declared he would."

It was of Sir John she thought.

Nearly three weeks had gone since that morning in the Park when the news of John Dunworthy's return reached her, and yet he had never appeared to her and made no sign until this day, when his mother had promised most faithfully on his account that he would attend the party.

In another corner stood Chattie.

Her slim young form was garbed in white, a large broad-brimmed hat shaded her face, which grew more piquant every day; the sun picked out the gold in her ruddy curls and lit up the strange hue in her eyes. She was not one whit so pretty as her sister, yet attracted far more notice.

For some time she chatted generally with the groups of people as they arrived; then, after a little while, she found herself alone with one man,

and they sauntered into a quiet path alone.
"Well," breathed Chattie, "what news?"

"We have found Mott," replied Lord Eric; "he went over to Paris for a week or so, but there is no sign of her."

Chattie's cheeks were fading as white as her gown.

"What can have happened? Lord Eric, do—do you think he has killed her?"

The words were barely whispered.

The young man shook his head decidedly.

"No; of that I am certain. She has fled from him, and he can find her no easier than we can. I have learned through several sources that Mott is

like a madman. Did he love her so much?"

"Love her!" repeated Chattie in accents of mingled scorn and anger. "What did he know of love? He dragged her down, broke her heart—stamped on it; then by threats forced her to marry him. Love! Horace Mott! But let us forget him. Poor—poor Ulrica! Lord Eric, we loved one another more than sisters. She was so pure—so true—so sweet."

There were tears in Chattie's eyes as she finished.

"The thought comes," she went on quickly, "if she has ended it all perself."

"You mean, that she has killed herself?"

Chattie nodded her head.

Lord Eric looked grave, but he answered very cheerfully .

"Oh no, no; we must not think that. We shall find her - be sure of

that. I am most hopeful -- most hopeful."

"How good you are," murmured Chattie; "and when we find her I shall telegraph straight to Uncle Guy. He will take her back to Bathurst, and we shall keep her to ourselves."

"Secrets!" laughed a shrill gay voice.

And turning, they saw Connie leaning on the arm of a handsome grave-faced young man.

He s'epped forward, slipping Connie's hand on one side to grasp Chattie's two eager ones.

" Johnnie Jack!"
" Dear little Chattie!"

That was all; but what volumes of meaning in those five words!

Sir John stood holding Chattie's fingers, as though he touched some haven after a long and troubled passage. Neither spoke then; their hearts were too full.

Connie frowned and broke in with:

"Come Chattie, if you welcome Sir John so warmly, Basil will be quite ealous.

"I don't think Basil would grudge me anything -not even this," said

Sir John.

And stooping, he touched Chattie's lips with his.

Connie felt jealous even of her sister. Sir John had welcomed her warmly, but with not a tithe as much pleasure as he showed in his meeting with Chattie.

"We must not keep you, Johnnie Jack," said Chattie, forcing herself to speak lightly. "Lord Eric, too, must take me back to the rest. Mother

will want me."

And slipping her hand through Lord Eric's arm, Chattie moved away.

"Let me have your news as soon as you get any," she murmured; "I am not going away yet."

Sir John glanced after her with a sigh, but Connie pretended not to

hear it.

"Come," she said, with a pretty little laugh, "I look upon you as my property. I am your nurse, you must remember."

"Indeed I shall never forget," the young man answered gravely; "I can-

not try to thank you --- "

"I want no thanks—only tell me about your travels, and what you have been doing."

"I fear I have forgotten everything of interest," was his reply.

Connie bit her lip.

Was his mind rooted to that girl, and after all she had done, too? Really it was most provoking.

"But won't you try and think of something very thrilling?" she asked, glancing up at him with a sweet smile.

Sir John woke from his gloomy thoughts. His conscience smote him

as he remembered all the supposed kindness Connie had shown him.

"Let us sit here," he said as they came to the chairs, "and I will do my best."

The afternoon glided on.

To Connie it was a paradise — a very heaven of delight. The goal for

which she had worked so nard was actually in sight; her spirits rose to the

very acme of bliss.

At last the sun began to descend. Mrs. Wren's guests took their leave. There were dinners, the last ball of the season to attend, and fashion flowed from Regent's Park to the West End.

Lady Dunworthy and her son were the two last to depart, the mother

looking, if anything, more pompous and sententious than ever.

"I have persuaded this dear girl to pay us a long visit at Dunworthy, John," she said, patting Connie's hand.

"Say you will be glad to see me," whispered Connie, coquettishly.

"I think you know that," was his answer, given courteously, but with no

warmth. He was indifferent as to whether she came or not.

To Chattie he said nothing, only their hands lingered in the farewell grasp, and their eyes, meeting, filled full with tears.

"But I am strong now - quite - quite strong." Ulrica spoke the words with a faint smile. Graves looked at her in

silence.

Was it not the girl's spirit she had rescued from that brief, fiery struggle between the brain and the madness of fever? Ulrica was so frail, so thin, so white, she did not seem human,

"Are you so anxious to leave me?" asked the woman, speaking at

length.

The girl stretched out her worn hand and caught the other's work-stained

"You know I do not mean that," she answered; "but I long for air. I long to get away, Graves. My heart aches in this city—it burns and aches!"

"I will ask the doctor to-night, and if he says you may travel, I will

take you to the sea."

Ulrica murmured, "the sea," softly, to herself; then another thought

"Graves," she said, hurriedly, "what about money? Oh, forgive me; I am utterly helpless to do anything for --- "

The older woman stooped over the chair at the window.

"You are my child," she answered, tenderly; "my dear child, that I will willingly care for to the end of my days, if I may."

They clasped each other's hands, then Graves turned away; there was an

eager, almost excited look on her face.

"Dr. Greenwood can't come himself this evening; he is going to send some one else." "I don't think I want a doctor now," Ulrica said, moving her head, from

which all the luxuriant hair had been shorn, to and fro on the chair. "Don't you?" Graves smiled faintly. "I think you do."

"But if he says I may go to the sea, how can I take you from your home? You have your work to do."

The older woman stood silent for a second.

"Yes; I have work to do," she repeated, bitterly; "but that can wait

" Till what?" asked Ulrica.

"Till you are better. Now, I want you to get to sleep for a while, and to look your best when the doctor comes."

Ulrica sent a smile of grateful sweetness to the worn face, and rested back with a sigh of utter weakness, yet of a consciousness of peace as she was left alone.

She clung to this woman - this strange, abruptly-mannered, yet gentle nurse, whose tenderness had been without limit, whose care was never

diminished.

Graves seemed now her only friend; the others, whom she loved, stood as so many spirit-forms in the background, inexpressibly dear, but unapproachable.

A chasm of misery and shame stretched between herself and them. It

must never be bridged over, at least by her, so she determined.

With Graves it was different; there was some bond of sympathy and suffering between them, though Ulrica knew not what its nature was.

Graves had been instrumental in aiding her to sorrow; now she held forth her hand to help her from that load of trouble, and Ulrica did not

disdain to grasp that hand.

In a dim, mysterious way, she had some recollection of the word "revenge," uttered that night as they stole away in the shadows; but illness had followed so swiftly, she could not recall exactly what had occurred, and she had not spoken to Graves once on the subject, or even breathed her husband's detested name.

By-and-by, lying back in her chair, her thoughts wandered into a peaceful dream; her weak, weary limbs relaxed; her hands lay on her lap; her white, sweet, sad face, from which every gleam of youth seemed gone, lay

in the evening sunshine still in sleep.

The door opening softly did not rouse her, nor the approach of some one

to her side.

Some happy bygone time must have flitted across the vision of her dream, for her pale lips parted, and she smiled; then the smile faded, and a weary, patient look dawned on her face again.

"How changed!" whispered the silent watcher; "how changed!"

Ulrica moved in her sleep, but still the onlooker never stirred. A mist of hushed tears stole over his sight, and blotted out the picture for an instant. Then the vague consciousness of another's presence seemed to come to

Ulrica. Her hands trembled, her lips parted, her eyelids lifted slowly. There was an instant's pause, a sudden rising in the chair, a look of delight, then acute disappointment in the star-like sapphire eyes as she sank

back murmuring:

"Only a dream - again a dream!"

"No, it is no dream, Ulrica," spoke a strong voice, which seemed con-

centrated with emotion; "look again, dear, right into my face."

Ulrica felt her hands clasped, herself drawn into sitting position; her gaze met the steady wooing gaze of eyes that had never left her memory, and with a sob of joy she cried faintly:

"Uncle Guy, at last — at last! Oh, thank God!"

Guy drew the frail form into his arms; he was kneeling beside her, and pressed his lips to her brow.

"Yes, Ulrica, at last; and, by Heaven's will, forever now. My poor lamb, my child, my dear one!"

"Uncle Guy - Uncle Guy!" she murmured every now and then with a

catch in her voice; "at last!"

Guy's heart thrilled with the joy he could not repress at the delight she showed; but the joy was fleeting; the pain called up by her changed appearance and the knowledge of her position lived longer and more

"Tell me," murmured the girl, as Guy drew up a chair and smoothed back the soft, short, wavy locks from her hot brow—" tell me how—how did you find me?"

"I have been here often before. All through your illness I came night and day, but I would not see you till you were better. I will tell you how you were discovered, but not now - another time, dear."

Ulrica held his hand tightly clasped between her two hot ones.

"Oh, the happiness, the joy, to feel your hand, to know it is no myth, but you yourself sitting here!" she said, lifting her great, glorious eyes to his. "I have pictured it so often in my dreams, I can scarcely believe it is real now."

"I can testify to this being solid flesh and blood," Guy said lightly,

holding up his hand; "surely it is substantial enough, Ulrica."

Ulrica smiled a weak, wan smile.

"It is to me the hand of an angel," was her answer. There was a moment's pause, and then she asked, in low tones: "And mother - what of her? What does she think of me and of my conduct?"

"I have a message for you - here it is. You can read for yourself."

Ulrica took the tiny note with trembling fingers.

"When will my adopted child come back to me?" she read. "I am waiting for her with all the love of old."

The paper fluttered down, and Ulrica's lips quivered for an instant.

"I cannot go back. I will not bring disgrace on those I love," she whispered.

"You did not notice the address," Guy said gently, picking up the note again. "Look: Belleview Cottage, Seamouth. It is the dearest, quaintest little place in the world, Ulrica. I took my—our mother down there about a fortnight ago, and all sorts of preparations have been going on since in honor of the interesting invalid."

Ulrica did not smile as he finished; she was gazing out of the window

with a sad, fixed look, and her hands were clasped together.

"Uncle Guy," she said, after a while. "I cannot go; think what it would be if - if he found me. The very thought of him approaching any of you whom I love sends a shiver through me; then think, dear - think," she went on hurriedly - " if - if he came, I should have to go with him, and the misery after my brief glimpse of Paradise would be too great. I could not bear it - no, no; I could not bear it!"

Guy bent and touched her forehead with his lips.

"Ulrica, be at peace, dear. Your - he will not molest you, for a time He is out of England, and I do not think he will return just at least.

"Gone!" said the girl with feverish eagerness; "really gone! But where,

Uncle Guy - where?"

"To America, I believe." Ulrica breathed a deep sigh.

"The very air seems clearer," she murmured, closing her eyes for an instant.

Guy did not speak till she looked up again. "You will come, Ulrica," was all he said.

"Give me one moment to think," was her answer. "But first, tell me why has he gone?"

"He has sailed with two or three others - for amusement, I presume;

and also in furtherance of some financial speculation."

Guy spoke cautiously. He did not intend that she should learn the truth, at least yet—that Horace Mott had had to depart hastily from the metropolis, and, indeed, vanish from England for a time, in consequence of an ugly fracas and exposure at his *écarté* table. It was sufficient for him that Mott was gone and Ulrica was free for a short while.

He rose as he ended the words and sauntered away.

Ulrica sat very still, thinking and thinking. Her mind was full of a complex variety of thoughts, pain, and pleasure; a shudder of remembrance and a thrill of anticipation, disgust, and love jostled one another together, and at last the brief struggle was over.

"Well?" asked Guy's eyes, though his lips were mute, as she looked

across at him.

She stretched out her hand.

"Yes," she whispered; "I can resist no longer; take me home to her; let me taste some joy once more before I die!"

"Die!" repeated Guy, his voice choked by emotion. "Live, Ulrica,

my darling! Live, to give us gladness for days to come."

Ulrica smiled a peaceful, contented smile; then she looked down, and a

shade fell over her face.

"One thing more," she murmured. "I cannot meet Jack — that is beyond me, Uncle Guy."

"Nor shall your strength be tried. Jack knows nothing; be comforted,

and trust in me."

"I will!" cried Ulrica, pressing her lips to his hand; "I will, for you have never failed."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

"TOHN!"

" Mother!"

"Come and settle with us about the lawn-tennis tournament."

"Oh, yes, Sir John, please."

Connie managed to put any amount of pretty eloquence in the last word.

Sir John, who was intent on looking through a Bradshaw, rose from his chair by the open window as the two ladies approached it on the terrace. He kept his finger between the pages still; his face looked handsome as of yore, yet he wore a careworn, wearied expression.

"Tournament, mother! This is the first I have heard of it," he said

half irritably.

Lady Dunworthy looked annoyed.

"I don't know where your ears have been then, for we have discussed it

openly for three days."

"Perhaps you don't feel equal to the task of entertaining in this sultry weather," Connie added in her gentlest way; "it really does sound exhausting."

"Oh, it is not a question of strength," Sir John answered with a faint smile in her direction; he was always touched by her smooth discretion and

thoughtfulness when with her.

She vanished from his mind as soon as her gossamer draperies were wafted away.

"Of what, then?" asked his mother, tightening her lips in an ominous

fashion.

"Of inclination," he replied shortly; "and on that score I beg to veto the lawn-tennis tournament altogether."

Lady Dunworthy's lace cap quivered with her wrath.

"Really, John, you are most trying; you know we must give our usual entertainment to the country, and instead of helping, you are only an obstruction."

Sir Jolin's handsome brow darkened.

"What if I refuse to give any entertainment at all?" he asked in a way he had never assumed before.

His mother's temper was soon roused.

She gave a short laugh.

"What? Why, you will afford more food for gossip than you have already."

Connie could have willingly hit Lady Dunworthy, but she kept a smil-

ing face.

"Oh, dear! how sorry I am; the tournament was all my idea, Sir John."

Sir John's frown vanished slowly, and Lady Dunworthy turned on her

heel and sailed angrily away.

Connie leaned against the window, round which the roses and honey-

suckle nodded and gave forth their sweetness to the air.

She made a pretty picture, in her pale blue batiste gown, exquisitely made, with her yellow locks bunched in studied artistic disorder in a coil in the nape of her neck.

She sent a deprecating look to the young man, who stood moodily gaz-

ing across the lawn, and said with half a sigh:

"You have been vexed again, and all through me."

"Through you!" Sir John repeated, rousing himself; "indeed no, Connie. You do nothing that ever vexes me."

She turned her head away to hide the triumph that would come, and

spoke gently:

"Poor Lady Dunworthy! You must not be hard on her. She is Conservative to the backbone, and the thought of not giving the usual summer fete troubles her. We ought to think of that, Sir John, and act accordingly."

"You have a kind heart," said Sir John, with a smile. "Of course, if my mother is disappointed, that is another matter; but — but she expresses

herself so strangely."

"It is not every one who possesses tact."
"Indeed no," Sir John agreed heartily.

Connie smiled, then touching the Bradshaw he held with her dainty white hand, she asked:

"Pray, why that book? Don't—oh, don't say you are going away."
"Well, I must confess I had serious thoughts of so doing," he replied, smiling; "but if you command——"

"I do not command - I plead," was Connie's answer, delivered with

the accompaniment of a blush.

"Then naught remains but to yield."

"Give up the book!"

Connie stretched out her hand, and with a low bow Sir John renounced his Bradshaw.

"So far so good," she observed. "Now, are you busy, or can you spare me time to stroll round and listen to my suggestions for this aforesaid fête?"

" I am at your service."

Sir John stepped onto the terrace, but the fleeting look of amusement had vanished from his face. He was grave again, as he turned beside Connie and sauntered away.

"We ought to have Chattie here for this," he said, forcing himself to be

conversational.

Connie frowned, unseen by him.

"Oh, Chattie is too much wrapped up in Basil's home-coming to care for anything else."
"When does Basil arrive?"

"Some time this week."

"And when is this tournament to be?"

"Wednesday next."

"Oh, then perhaps Basil and Chattie could both come," said Sir John.

A week had gone by since their morning stroll. Connie and Sir John had had many others, but in none of them did the conversation get be-yond the most ordinary topics of the day. Still Connie's heart grew more and more elated, and Lady Dunworthy, seeing her son enter almost warmly into her arrangements, was most beaming and genial.

Sir John spent a wretched week. The thought that Connie loved him

had forced itself into absolute conviction as day passed day.

His heart had been touched by Connie's sympathetic friendship; but,

beyond that, he had no thought, one way or another, for this girl.

"I shall never love but you, my darling," he would murmur to Ulrica's image enshrined in his inmost soul. "You, my angel, my spirit of loveliness! how could I do ought but love you? And yet - oh, my God - you are gone from me forever. Ulrica-Ulrica!"

Wednesday, the day chosen for Dunworthy Castle summer fête, dawned

gloriously hot and beautiful.

As the truth about Connie forced itself upon Sir John Dunworthy, he

grew uneasy and miserable.

"I will go away. It is not fair to be with her when I know I can never be anything to her. She is so good—so young, too. She will grow out of it soon. Yes I will go away."

As Connie dressed for the entertainment, she smiled to herself in the

"To-day, Madame Ulrica, I shall put my foot, figuratively, upon you. I shall win. He suspects that I love him. Well, call it love if he likes. I am determined to be his wife, and to-day shall see that result announced, or else my name is not Connie Wren."

Her toilet, more dainty than ever, provoked a murmur of admiration

among Lady Dunworthy's guests.

"How Mrs. Wren contrived to dress her like that is a puzzle to me,"

was the remark made confidently more than once.

Connie, moving about in her gown of white moire silk, draped with real Valenciennes lace, could have satisfied their curiosity at once if she had taken them up-stairs and shown them a bulky document just received from Madame Amina, the contents of which her mother knew nothing about, and which, as Sir John's future wife, Connie determined should trouble her very little.

Having in view the fact that to-day must end the matter, Connie

played her part accordingly.

She looked paler, more delicate than ordinarily.

Her face wore a serious, though tender look. Whenever she met Sir John's gaze, she affected to smile easily, then bit her lip and turned suddenly away—all of which worked upon him even better than she could ever have dreamed.

Love and sorrow make us wondrous kind.

As he suffered himself, so John Dunworthy, without a particle of vanity, imagined Connie to be suffering on his account, and it pained him beyond words.

He wandered about among the crowd, wishing that he were miles away, yet winning golden opinions from everybody for his genial manner and

friendly words.

Lady Dunworthy watched him, and her selfish nature was satisfied.

"Connie was right," she nodded to herself; "he only wants handling properly, and he will forget that creature as easily as we could wish."

Forget Ulricat Ab how, little they knew this many how little they

Forget Ulrica! Ah, how little they knew this man—how little they knew the depth, the intensity with which he clung to her memory!

He had schooled himself to think of her as Horace Mott's wife, but it

was a task almost beyond him.

He could not bear to recall her sweet, exquisite face, and know that she was pledged to that villain from whose footstep she had been used to shrink as from a reptile. And it was all through him—all for his sake! To save his life she had sacrificed her own. The bitterness was threefold when he remembered that.

Guy had told him Ulrica's piteous story as he had learnt it from Dr. Drewitt, and it was only by force of will that he had prevented Sir John

from doing murder.

Mad with the horrible truth ringing in his ears, Horace Mott would have fared ill at his hands had not Guy, by every care, prevented a meeting, and kept by his friend till Mott was lost sight of.

Then came the journey abroad.

That weary time courting forgetfulness, yet clinging to memories.

And now John Dunworthy was at his home once more, and Connie determined he should remain there, at all events for a period.

The tennis tournament was a great success.

The band from London discoursed sweet music on the lawn, and Connie

assisted her hostess in her most carefully affectionate way.

Sir John, with his burden of sorrow, felt out of place and miserable in this scene of gaiety and sunshine. He would have left it but for his promise to Connie.

"She begged me to stay to please my mother," he mused; "she little knew the task she put on me, and yet I can scarcely refuse. She has done

so much for me, and she suffers, too."

He thought this as he sauntered along, and was passing behind two chairs and two sunshades, beneath which were two ladies.

At this moment he caught the mention of Connie's name.

"Why did she not marry young Draycott?" said one; "I know he proposed."

"Why has she not married long before this?" returned the other. "For one and the same reason, and that is—at least, so I think, and many others, too—that she has some hopeless attachment for some one we know nothing of."

"Well, it is a great pity. Connie Wren should marry; she is a nice

sensible girl, and \_\_\_"

And Sir John hurried on.
"A hopeless attachment!"

There was the verification of his fear.

Yes, to-morrow he would leave his home again. His nature shrank from giving further pain, and were he to be with Connie a hundred years, he said to himself, things would never change—Ulrica would reign triumphantly as his love forever.

No hint or suggestion of offering marriage to Connie crossed his mind -

it would have seemed to him almost a sin.

The afternoon sun declined, the tournament raged excitedly.

Connie had refused to play.

"I don't feel equal to it," had been her remark, and she contented herself with relieving Lady Dunworthy of the most arduous part of entertaining.

She was indeed growing weary and cross. Why did not Sir John speak? She must contrive something—she must bring about the conclusion as

she had arranged. Her sharp brain worked busily.

The fête was to end in a dance, and about seven o'clock the lawn-tennis

was finished.

Connie, with a young man beside her who honestly admired her prettiness, went for a short stroll before dressing for the evening.

She took very little notice of her companion's chatter; she was thinking.

Little by little they wandered into the quieter part of the grounds, and then her quick eyes caught a glimpse of Sir John sauntering alone, deep in thought.

The moment was come. Just as they reached their host, Connie gave a faint shriek, jerked her foot, and fell to the ground before either of the

young men could prevent her.

"You are hurt?" cried Sir John, turning round, and stooping to lift

"My foot!" whispered Connie, inaudibly; and then, calling up all her efforts, she relapsed into a very decent semblance of a faint—not enough to deceive an expert, but sufficient to take in both the men beside her.

"What shall we do?" asked her late companion.

"Run to the house for some water. Don't make a fuss, or you may upset my mother. Be quick! She must have twisted her foot!"

The young man darted away.

Connie was widely awake to all that happened; she had timed it

splendidly.

It must take ten minutes to get to the Castle and back with water, and in ten minutes a battle might be fought—a kingdom lost—why not a simple-minded man's sympathy, if not love, gained?

She rested back motionless in Sir John's arms; her delicate gown would not be improved by so close an acquaintance with the ground, but what

was a gown to the stake for which she played?

Sir John bent over her in genuine sorrow and alarm, and attered a true exclamation of gladness as she opened her eyes.

"You are better? I am so relieved," he said, as she passed one hand over her brow.

Connie tried to smile.

"What is it? Have you sprained your ankle, do you think?"

She shook her head.

"No, no; it is really nothing. See, I can move my foot! What a coward you must think me, Sir John, to faint for nothing."

"Indeed, I consider you no coward," was his reply, given earnestly. "Can you stand? Let me help you; give me your hand."

Connie let him lift her to her feet with most realistic weakness.

"I think it must have been the fright," she said, resting against a tree, and still against him too. "But I am not very strong. The heat tired me, and — and — Don't let me keep you here, Sir John. I am all right now, indeed."

"Do you think I should leave you as you are?" was his answer, given with a touch of vexation as she turned her face away, and spoke as though

tears were forcing themselves into her eyes and voice.

Connie's heart thrilled.

"But indeed — indeed I wish you would," she whispered faintly; "I — I

am not myself to-day."

"I shall take you to my mother. You want rest; you have been doing too much. Well, you will have quiet soon, for I shall go away to-morrow, and the ——"

Connie interrupted him.

"Going away?" she said with a wailing inflection in her voice; "I oh, how disappointed your mother will be!

Sir John was silent.

There was no mistaking it now. As plain as could be said by broken words, Connietold him she loved him.

He shook himself, and spoke hurriedly.

"Yes; my home is not pleasant to me now. I cannot stay here."

"Not when love bids you stay?"

It was a bold plunge, but it was done.

Connie, conscious that assistance might come at any moment, could bear the suspense no longer.

Sir John turned at her tender whisper. He shrank from her out-

stretched hands.

"There is no love for me, for I can give none in return," he said hoarsely. "There is love where there ever has been love for you — in my heart," was the answer.

He stood overwhelmed with the miserable awkwardness of the moment. "Connie," he said at last, "I cannot ask you to sacrifice yourself —I cannot ask you to be my wife. You know why. You know I love Ulrica with all my heart and soul. Can I then offer you an empty heart, a name —

nothing more? If these please you, take them; but I warn you, love for another can never come!"

Connie nestled close to him.

"I am content," she whispered, "if I am near you."

He made no effort to clasp her in his arms or press his lips to hers.

"So be it," was all he said.

And so Connie's betrothal took place on the very spot where Ulrica had lifted her eyes to his and breathed her wondrous love. Connie's heart beat fast with triumph, but the man's was as cold as ice.

### CHAPTER XXVII.

MUY left Ulrica early on that evening of their meeting; he feared the excitement might tell on her frail strength, and he wanted her to be able to travel down to Seamouth at the earliest opportunity.

Ulrica's lovely eyes had the first reflection of happiness in them that Graves had ever seen! there was a tremulous beauty, too, in her sweet lips

and the faint color traced on her white cheeks.

"So you are going from me?" the older woman said sadly, as she tenderly helped the sick girl to rest.

Ulrica put one hand in hers.

"No; you will come with me, too - mother will welcome you."

Graves shook her head.

"No, my child."

"But you can leave your house; you have no ties - nothing to keep you from me."

And Ulrica laid her head on the other's shoulders, as she said this,

pleadingly.

Graves stroked her soft hair gently; her face looked stern and fixed, yet her eyes were tender and sad as they rested on the girl nestling close to

"You will be better alone, dear," she answered; then, as Ulrica began to protest, she continued: "Besides, I have work to do, a mission to perform, one - one that may take time and trouble."

"But why not wait till I am better? Then I can help you too."

Against herself this woman shuddered.

Let Ulrica share in her task of vengeance — a vengeance to be hurled on her own husband!

"It is impossible," she said, hurriedly.

Ulrica was silent for a while, but when her head sank onto her soft pillows, and Graves was busying herself with making the bed comfortable, she said very gently:

"Forgive me for asking-but is this work something connected with

your dead child?"

Graves' face was hidden, but her voice sounded clear as she answered:

"Yes; it is a message from the dead. I must fulfill it, even though it cost me my life. Now you are not to talk any more; this has been a day of great excitement to you; you must have all the sleep you can get, for you will want all your strength. God bless you, child!"

And she stole softly away, leaving Ulrica in a state of new peace, with visions of past and future happiness flitting before her weary eyes, and a sense of comfort and protection hovering over her, such as she had never

experienced since her flight from Bathurst.

After that she grew stronger very, very gradually, and one morning, about a week after that eventful day, Guy pronounced Ulrica able to bear the journey.

Her old maid, Mary, who had been retained in Mrs. Strong's service, came up to travel with her young mistress, whom she was honestly glad to see again, and Graves had to say farewell to the girl whom she had grown to love as her own daughter, and to whom she had tried with all her might

to atone for the wrong she had done her in her blind infatuation for Horace Mott.

Ulrica sighed a great deep sigh of relief as the train moved slowly away from London. Regret was mingled with it indeed, for she did not like parting with her stern-faced, tender nurse, but she consoled herself with picturing their speedy meeting, and as Guy made her cozy in a sheltered corner of the luxurious carriage, she felt almost as if she were gliding away from her misery as from a bad dream, and was once more the Ulrica of old, free to look forward to happiness and peace.

"She is a strange woman," Guy said as they took their last look at Graves.

"A good one," Ulrica said earnestly: "she has proved that to me, in-

deed.

"Who could help being good to you?" was the thought in Guy's breast; out loud he answered: "Yes, she has; her face is certainly not an index to her heart. Now, Ulrica, you must keep silence for a time. Close your

eyes; I promise to rouse you when we come near the sea."

Ulrica smiled, and though at first she protested sleep was the last thing in her mind, before very long the swift motion, and balmy summer air acted on her strength, the heavily fringed eyelids shut out the sapphire orbs, and her head rested back against the cushions in slumber.

Guy gazed his fill at this living realization of his heart's queen.

How well he knew the sweet face, the tender lips, that even in her dreams trembled with the habit that grief and shame had brought! The grace, the thoughtful beauty—all were graven on his memory.

It was at once a joy and an intense sadness to sit watching her.

Guy had suffered much when a witness to Ulrica's love and happiness—indeed, as we have seen, he could not bear it at first, and departed to gather strength to live his lonely live in future; but that pain was not as great as the misery that lived in his breast, as he realized the fact that Ulrica was barred from the joy that he had prayed unselfishly might be hers.

While Horace Mott lived she must suffer, and Guy knew only too well

While Horace Mott lived she must suffer, and Guy knew only too well that the cloud which rested now on Ulrica's husband would not be remembered long, and then would come the struggle in which the girl would be

called upon to bear her burden once more.

He sat with his arms folded across his breast, looking thus into the future, yearning to clasp Ulrica in his arms and bear her away from all sorrow and pain, content in his love forever. By-and-by she woke, and caught the expression on his face.

"Uncle Guy," she whispered, softly.

Guy turned instantly.

"Just in time for the sea! Look, Ulrica, do not the white-crested waves

spell health and vigor in their merry dances?"

Ulrica bent to the window; the breeze blew back her short, wavy locks. She gave a glad sigh as she inhaled the scent of the sea, and beheld the wide expanse of sunlit waters.

"Oh, Uncle Guy, how lovely. I feel — I feel as I did that first day at

Bathurst, when I realized what happiness meant."

"As you will again, darling, please God!"

He busied himself in gathering together the things, and Ulrica sat gazing at the sea, her heart rising as they drew nearer and nearer to it.

"I should like to be buried by the sea, Uncle Guy, it is so beautiful."

"Why do you talk like this?" cried the man, stung to exquisite torture at the meaning. "What have you to do with death, Ulrica?"

She saw his pained look, and at once smiled.

"I am morbid, I suppose," was her reply, though her wish was unchanged; "you must scold me, Uncle Guy. Why, are we there already?"

The train coming to a standstill answered her, and the next instant Guy was handing her tenderly from the carriage, murmuring in a voice choked with emotion:

"Welcome to our mother and home, Ulrica!"

Connie lost no time in announcing her engagement.

She whispered it to Lady Dunworthy as soon as Sir John and she had arrived at the house.

That walk across the lawn was performed by the young man as in a

dream.

They met several people coming with water and offers of assistance, but Connie stated, with a pretty air of recovery, that she wanted nothing, and hung on to Sir John's arm, limping a little as she walked.

The sense of conscious proprietorship in her every gesture somewhat prepared these for what was coming, but to the majority the news, which Lady Dunworthy announced most pompously, occasioned much surprise and many whispered comments.

"He is soon off with his old love and on with the new," observed one

lady.

"Ah, well, he was treated very badly," was the remark of another.
"Her fishing has ended well," a spiteful mother remarked, who had never despaired of securing Sir John sooner or later for her own pretty daughter: "she has positively flung herself at his head."

"How pleased Lady Dunworthy looks!" a more sympathetic neighbor

added.

"Yes: and how wretched Sir John!"

John Dunworthy a' that moment hated Connie, hated his mother, and himself above all others; he could have cursed himself for having been caught in so transparent a trap, for now against his better nature he began to see how artfully Connie had brought about the result which was driving him to despair.

What had he done?

Pledged himself to another, while his whole being lived only for Ulrica. The thought was madness. Though they were parted by a barrier almost as stern and relentless as death itself, since he had learned the bitter truth from Guy, and realized Ulrica's sacrifice in its intensity, his love had risen fourfold; he treasured it for his angel, his sweet, fair, first love, never to grow less, nor to be erased.

And now - now he was to marry Connie, a girl who in that brief miser-

able moment he seemed to know and see all at once in her true colors.

How could he have been so weak!

He started to his feet, and pushed open his window. A broad stream of

moonlight stole in.

It was on just such a night as this that Ulrica had plighted her tenderly whispered vows. How happy he had been then, and how wretched he was now.

"How could I let you leave me that day," was the sudden sigh of his heart; "why did I not go to Bathurst, when I started that morning. If I had gone - if only I had seen her once again, if -"

Ah, Sir John Dunworthy, how many "ifs" have gone to swell the flood

of human misery that never ceases?

No; he could not do this thing, he could not be unfaithful to his love; he would speak plainly to Connie — tell her he could never make her happy, and leave it to her to release him.

Armed with this resolve he went back to the others.

The fête had ended in a sort of impromptu dance, but the summer night made much exertion impossible, and though the band discoursed sweet music from a corner of the lawn, the assemblage was broken up into small groups, who chatted and strolled together in the moonlight.

Connie was quick to miss Sir John.

She was attired in another white gown for the evening, and moved about a really pretty sight in a trailing robe of soft satin, pearls gleaming round her throat, and diamonds glistening like dewdrops from her hair and laces.

Her heart was elated, yet she was bitterly mortified. Her betrothed,

instead of adding to her triumph, only threw a shadow on it.

She felt that her enemies—and there were many present—were whispering already their astonishment at Sir John's strange absence, and she was growing really angry when at last the host made his appearance. She went to meet him slowly, putting on her sweetest smile.

"Where hast thou been, oh, most errant knight?" she inquired, as she

slipped one gloved hand through his arm.

Sir John gazed at her, and his heart suddenly loathed him. He could never tell why, but a revulsion of feeling came over him, recalling all the contemptuous indifference he once had towards the worldly Miss Wren, only much deeper. It strengthened his resolution.

"Can you come away from these people? I want to speak to you."

Connie winced.

She knew in an instant, from his cold, forced tone, what he had to say, but she did not mean to listen. Her thin lips were compressed, and in her downcast eyes there lurked a fire of wrath and vexation, but she acted her

"I can guess what it is," she said, with a soft little laugh — "you want me to write to mamma? Well, dear, I have done so—at least, I have sent her a wire, as I was afraid some one might tell her before she receives my letter, and that would wound her so. Now, am not I a true prophetess? That was it, was it not?"

Sir John stood silent; he saw that it was too late; to draw back now

would mean exposure, scandal, and perhaps disgrace.

At this proof of Connie's worldly determination, his contempt grew greater. But he was too much the soul of honor to let her see her pitiful audacity was known to him yet.

"Yes," he said slowly; "that was it."

And then he moved forward to speak to some old ladies whom he liked, and Connie was left to smile and gossip in the moonlight, while her heart raged and surged.

"It is she he is thinking of. Oh, Ulrica Mott, if ever the chance comes I

will make you suffer double for this!"

### CHAPTER XXVIII.

"YOU will not walk too far, dear?"

The question was put by Mrs. Strong; her tones were anxious and affectionate.

Ulpica smiled.

"I will not go at all, unless you wish it," she said at once.

"I do wish it; but I don't want you to tire yourself. Guy would be so

angry. I only wish I could accompany you."

"Uncle Guy is a tyrant, and so I shall tell him when he returns to-night. Now, I pledge myself to come back very quickly. I may rest for a few minutes. But — "
"But I will trust you. Au revoir, my dear child."

A week had worked wonders for Ulrica; she seemed to thrive suddenly, and to grow out of all her weakness. Her face, even lovelier now than before, looked each morning more animated, her youthful vigor was apparently all returned.

Mrs. Strong was more than delighted, and was quite angry because Guy

would not chime in with her. But this he would not do.

"She is far from strong yet, mother," he said, as she spoke of Ulrica's wonderful improvement. "We must take great care of her."

About the beginning of the second week, business took Guy to London for one day only, and it was on the afternoon of the next, on which he was to return, that Ulrica was about to sally forth for her first walk alone since her illness.

She let Mrs. Strong wrap the small silk shawl across her chest, though she smillingly averred she did not need it, and was just on the point of

starting when Mrs. Strong's maid entered the room.

"If you please, ma'am, Joe Letts wants to know if you will see him."
"Joe Letts!" repeated Mrs. Strong.

Ulrica broke in quickly:

"He brought us some shrimps the other day, mother; you remember." "Ah, to be sure. Well, Bruce, ask him to come to the window, and I will speak to him. Some trouble, I suppose."

Joe Letts lurched onto the narrow verandah that ran around the cottage-

like residence.

"Beg parding, ma'am," he observed, touching his cap, a nondescript-looking article in mackintosh, "but your name is Mrs. Strong, ain't it?" Mrs. Strong smilingly answered in the affirmative.

"Then I've got a message for yer."

And Joe fumbled in the many pockets of his blue serge trousers and blouse, and produced a letter.

Mrs. Strong took it, a little surprised.

"Will you read it, my dear?" she asked, handing it to Ulrica. "My eyes are not so young as yours."

Ulrica looked at the envelope; the writing seemed familiar.

She tore it open; the next instant she uttered an exclamation. "It is from Father Lawrence! He wants to know where I am; he is ill," she managed to say.

This sudden recall to her past troubles unnerved her.

Mrs. Strong searched for her spectacles and read the note through

It was very curt, and dated from a village about a mile inland from Seamouth.

"We must wait till Guy comes," she said quietly.

Ulrica stood with one hand leaning on the table. She looked and felt distressed.

She could never forget the shock that Father Lawrence had caused her as he suddenly appeared before her that day at the old well.

The fisherman broke in:

"Begging your leddyship's pardings, his riverance beseeched me to ask the Dr. Strong to see him at onct. He wrote that litter last night, when he found out by accident as how yer leddyship was here. He's real ill, and this morning he says to me, 'Joe,' says he, 'ask him to come to me directly; there's something,' he says, 'something I must tell him afore I dies, he says; and so I come, my leddy, and I'll take the message."

"What does he say about me?" asked Ulrica hurriedly of Mrs. Strong.

Guy's mother looked at the note again.

"'Give me Miss Messenger's address - let me know where to find her. I have searched for her everywhere. I must see her or send her a message. I am very ill; and my need is urgent."

Ulrica remained silent for a while.

"Where is - is the sick man?" she asked Joe again.

"It's just a matter of a mile from here, your leddyship — at Garth, the next village. His riverance come down there a few months back on a visit to Father Peter; and then when his riverance went away, Father Lawrence stopped behind: He's a good man, is his riverance."

Úlrica nodded her head absently.

"Mother," she said quietly, "I will go to him."

"My darling!" cried Mrs. Strong, agitatedly; "no, no; you must not do such a thing. Wait till Guy comes home—he will go."

"He is ill - perhaps dying. I shall come to no harm. I feel I ought to go."

Ulrica's troubled face bore witness to this.

"But I do not think I ought to allow it; besides, think of the misery he has caused you, Ulrica dear."

"Death levels all that," the girl answered.

Mrs. Strong was silent; she put out her hand and drew Ulrica down to

her, kissing the sweet lips.

"Go then, my child! would that I could come with you; but don't go alone - take Mary. And Ulrica, promise me, do not remain long; remember your strength, and how precious you are to us!"
"Could I ever forget that?" whispered the girl. "My more than

mother, I know I have suffered at this man's hands, but I cannot refuse to

see him, now he is dying!"

Mrs. Strong gave Mary strict injunctions to look well after her mistress, and exacted a promise from Ulrica that she would take one of the village

cabs to Garth.

From Joe, Ulrica learnt all there was to know about Father Lawrence -how he had come a few months back on an apparently flying visit to the priest of the neighborhood; how Father Peter had been called away on illness in his family, and how Father Lawrence had taken the care of his parish till he was able to return.

"And now your leddyship sees as how his riverance himse ts took ill. He has been main bad for weeks past, but he were out in all weathers

doing some good or other.

Ulrica's heart had softened towards the priest long ago, and this tribute to him made her think of him with sad interest. She felt that she should hear some truth from his lips, though she cared little what it might be. Hope and joy were killed for her in life now. All she prayed for was peace.

She sat quietly in the shambling carriage, and sighed now and again as

the soft sea-breeze kissed her pale cheeks.

A sort of lassitude crept over her when she would permit it, which she never would in the presence of Guy or his mother, and it stole over her now.

She alighted from the fly wearily, and almost with difficulty.

This meeting with Father Lawrence recalled so much, that it took all her strength to gather herself together to face it.

Mary noticed her agitation, and, mindful of Mrs. Strong's injunctions,

said:

"Shall I take you home again, Miss Ulrica?" calling her by the old name, as she always did.

But Ulrica shook her head, and walked quietly up the path to the small

house.

A nursing sister opened the door, and looked grave as Ulrica inquired for Father Lawrence,

"I don't think I can let you see him. He is very ill this morning."
Ulrica spoke of the sick man's note to Dr. Strong, and his wish to know of her whereabouts.

The sister looked thoughtful.

"He has certainly been most restless. Perhaps this is the cause. Will you come in and wait here while I go and break the fact of your presence to him? I only came late last night. I did not know he had written a letter."

Ulrica sent Mary back to the fly, and sank onto the hard chair placed

in the hall.

"What is the matter with him?" she asked in low tones.

"He is suffering from an internal disease, which has afflicted him, it

seems, for years."

The sister passed up the narrow, uncarpeted staircase, while Ulrica tried to picture the face of the priest as she had known it, and reconcile it with suffering. It had always seemed to her the face of a man who possessed everything in life conducive to enjoyment. How she had wronged him!

The soft footsteps of the nurse sounded on her ears. "You may come up; he is most anxious to see you."

Ulrica rose and mounted slowly.

"Do not stay longer than you can help," whispered the sister.

Ulrica nodded and went slowly into the poor, almost wretched-looking bedroom.

She started as her eyes rested on the gaunt white face, and on the thin hand stretched tremblingly towards her. A stream of sunshine falling across the boarded floor seemed intrusive and out of place.

It was the room of an ascetic - no comforts. no beautiful objects to

gratify the sight, nothing but bare necessities.

"You - you have come. This is good."

The voice was only a whisper of the rich unctuous tones she remembered. She drew a chair to his bedside, and spoke from a heart full of sympathy, "I am glad I was near to come."

The sick man made no answer at first; he only mouned with closed eyes,

and the nurse bathed his brow with some vinegar-and-water.

Ulrica held the hand he had extended still between her own.

"You wished to speak to me," she said gently.

Father Lawrence struggled for a few seconds, and then answered in a husky whisper:

"Yes; so that I might make reparation before I — I die." Ulrica took the fan from the nurse and waved it to and fro.

"I wronged you," the sick man went on with difficulty. "Listen. The will—read—that day—was a false one. Your—your father left everything to you."

Ulrica fanned on slowly.

"Do not distress yourself," she said quietly and sadly; "I never cared

for the money."

"But I did." The words were uttered in tones of almost fierce self-reproach. "Ah, you did not know—no one knew but myself—how I have wrestled with this greed of gain, this love of gold—I, a priest of God and Our Lady. The temptations I had endured and conquered—yes, conquered all—till I met your father. Don't despise me more——"

His voice failed.

"I do not despise you, believe me," the girl said eloquently and earnestly.

"I do believe you," he answered, fixing his weary, pain-distraught eyes on her for an instant. "You are good and pure—pure as an angel. I must go on quickly, or my strength will fail. Your—your father, it seemed to me, had some sin on his soul. I set myself to find it out. For a month or so before his death he grew clearer and clearer in his brain. I—I succeeded"—he drew a heavy breath—"I succeeded in converting him, hoping then to get him into my power. Then came the day when he was seized. While Dr. Strong went to find you, he told me as well as he could gasp the reason of your mother's sudden death; how they had quarreled, how he had taunted her and angered her, little knowing she was suffering from a severe complaint of the heart, which any great excitement would culminate in death. My voice fails. You will find—"

The sister bent over him and moistened his lips.

"Shall I go?" asked Ulrica, lifting her agitated face to the other.

"It is a momentary faintness, and will pass. I think he wants to say you will find a packet among his papers on that table. He spoke to me of it just now—yes, that is it."

The two women sat on either side of the bed till he rallied again. After a moment's silence he turned his eyes and looked at Ulrica.

"You are changed - you have been ill," he murmured.

"Yes; but I am better now."

"And you will have happiness. I have had no peace of mind since that day I saw you in Dunworthy Wood. I waited in the village till the next morning, and fought with myself again and again to go to you—give you your rights, and tell you all I knew, but the fiend within me was too strong. I—I could not part with the money then."

"Do not talk of that," whispered Ulrica. "It has gone to enrich you

Church, and-"

Father Lawrence shook his head faintly.

"Not one penny has reached the Church," he whispered hoarsely. "I tried, but could not part with a farthing till—till I saw you again. After that my soul seemed to loathe the money. Your father's last wish to me to guard you and keep all for you, grew into a Nemesis. This illness, which has been on me for years, became worse and worse; then—then I was haunted with but one idea—one thought—to find you to tell you all. I have written letter after letter to Dr. Strong, which, I make no doubt, he never opened; and now—now, when I am at my last, God is merciful! You will forgive?"

"What have I to forgive?" Ulrica whispered, with tears in her eyes.
"We are all mortal. Who am I to judge? You—you alone can know

your temptations and struggles."

The priest murmured something with his lips.

The nurse bent to listen.

"The money is still in the same securities," she repeated word by word.
"I have made over everything to you. Promise to make your claim good."

"I promise," Ulrica said at once.

The money itself brought nothing but a shudder of dislike, but she could not refuse his plea.

She stooped and tenderly bathed his face, and as she did so his eyes opened, and he caught the gleam of her wedding-ring.

"You are married?"

Ulrica's lips compressed.

"I am Horace Mott's wife," she answered.
"And it was I who brought you to this."

"Not so!" she broke in quickly. "What you told me was truth, what he a lie. It is he, and he alone, to whom I owe all my misery."

The priest motioned to the nurse to raise him a little.

He put out one weak hand and let it rest on Ulrica's bent head.

"Child," he said, huskily and slowly, "be comforted. I give you my blessing—the blessing of a man who has sinned and atoned."

Ulrica slipped onto her knees on the floor.

Atoned, indeed! The very squalor and poverty that surrounded his

death-bed witnessed that.

"You may have unhappiness yet in store for you, but be true, good, faithful, as you have always been. 'Sorrow lasteth not forever; joy—joy cometh in——'"

His head dropped, and his heavy frame slipped from the nurse's hold.

Ulrica rose with dismay on her face, and the sound of footsteps coming
up the stairs, she turned to be wrapped in Guy's arms.

He had arrived immediately after she had started, and, without another

thought, followed quickly.

"Ulrica," he said, hurriedly, "this is no place for you. Go—go down to the sunshine and air."

Ulrica had grown fainter and fainter during the last five minutes.

"Look to him," she murmured, as she felt for the doorway; "he is—dying!"

Guy watched her make her way slowly down the stairs, then turned and bent over the silent form.

"Not dying, but dead!" he said quietly to the sister, who dropped on her knees and began to pray.

Guy went from the room; he called the woman who had acted as servant to the dead man, and having briefly told her that he would return that evening and give all the help in his power, he went to the carriage and Ulrica.

He spoke no word to her as they drove home, but he put her back in a corner, and when she shivered he drew the silken shawl closer round her, as

though the day were chilly instead of glorious summer warmth.

Mrs. Strong read from the girl's face that her nerves had been tried, and recommended sleep and rest, but Ulrica pleaded to sit by her side and lean her head on the motherly knee, saying truthfully she was comforted by it. Guy went over to Garth in the evening as promised, and yet another

surprise came for Ulrica, for about eight or nine o'clock, while she was trying to rid her memory of the sad scene, to forget the dying man, a worn figure came up the path, and Graves was announced.
"You have kept your promise—you have come to stay," cried Ulrica,

genuinely pleased to see her true friend and nurse.

Mrs. Strong added a few kind words—she had heard from Guy how

tenderly this woman had cared for Ulrica.

"No; I am come to say 'good-bye,'" Graves answered in a dull set ay. "I am going to leave England for a while."

"Leave England, Graves, and me!"

The indifference in the worn face broke for an instant into pain.

"Only for a time, my dear one," Graves whispered; "you are safe now with your friends, and I can do my work now that my mind is at rest about

"You dear, kind creature!"

Ulrica nestled to Grave's shoulder.

"I cannot bear to think you are going away! But you will come back -yes, promise."

"I promise, darling, if I live."

Then without another word, and despite all Ulrica's protests, Graves

went down the path, and vanished in the summer darkness.

"I will come back to you," she muttered as she went on her way, " with freedom and happiness in my hand for you, child, and satisfaction, fulfilled revenge in my heart for myself."

# CHAPTER XXIX.

UY, true to his word, fulfilled all his self-elected duties, and followed

the dead priest to his last resting-place.

He brought away the letter which Father Lawrence had tried to speak of to Ulrica, and when she had recovered a little from the shock her nervous system had received, he gave it to her.

Ulrica sat by the rolling waves in a quiet spot beneath the shade of an

old boat, when she opened this packet.

The letter was not long; it told her briefly all about her childhood, the veil that had hung over the name of her mother was withdrawn, and she knew the whole story as the priest had learned it from her father.

She touched the old love-letters that years ago had brought happiness to that dead mother's heart, and as she read the terse story of deceit and misery that followed - for George Messenger had not spared himself in his recital - tears welled to her eyes in sympathy for the sorrow that this other

young girl had been called upon to bear so long ago.

"A strange fate," she mused, as she put all the papers together again, and, leaning back, let her eyes roam over the dancing waves; "mother and daughter both alike. Well, as we have suffered here, perhaps beyond it will be different. If I have not happiness, at least I have peace—for a time. God is merciful to me!"

She looked up as she thought this, and smiled a welcome to Guy, who

now approached.

"It is lovely here," she said, dismissing all sad subjects and trying to be as light-hearted as she possibly could in his presence, feeling instinctively that he suffered when she was wretched.

"It is quite cozy," Guy agreed. "Have you got room for one other in

your corner, Ulrica?"

She moved up at once, and pointed to a portion of the woodwork beside her.

"Quantities of room. Is mother coming?"

"No; some one else."

Guy looked up as he spoke, and then Ulrica felt two small hands creep over her eyes, blotting out the sunshine.

Her heart thrilled.

"Chattie - it is Chattie. Oh, darling!"

Guy moved away as Chattie sat down on the old boat and clasped Ulrica in her arms.

"My dear—my sweet!" she whispered, "I have been dying to see

you, and Uncle Guy would not let me come till you were stronger."
"I am ever so much better, and you will make me quite well.

Chattie, dear Chattie, how glad I am to see your face once more!"

"And yet you would not let me come when I sent you message after message by Lord Eric."

Chattie nestled close to Ulrica's pale, lovely face.

"That was different, dear; you could not have come to me there."
"Well, never mind; we are together now, and that is everything. Let me hold your hand, Ulrica, and let me look at you."

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Ulrica smiled, and turned to the eager, piquante face beside her.
"Why, Chattie, you are quite grown-up now. How pretty your hair

looks!"

Chattie turned her head away suddenly; she did not want Ulrica to see her lips trembling, or the tears springing to her eyes, brought there by this vision of sweet, frail beauty, which was so pale a shadow of the Ulrica of only a year ago.

"You must not make me vain," she managed to say.

"I am not afraid. But come, Chattie, tell me your secret. I know it already, but I want to hear it from your own lips."

Chattie laughed shyly.

"About Basil, you mean? Well, do you know, Ulrica, I was never more astonished in my life — never!"

"Why?" asked Ulrica, clasping the hand she held, and drinking in the

delight of Chattie's presence with avidity.

"Because — well, one reason was that Basil always said he never could stand red hair, and as mine is nearly akin to carrots, you see ——"

Ulrica laughed.

"I call your hair a beautiful auburn," she observed.

"Ah, yes; so does Basil - now."

There was a delicious naïveté in the last remark.

"And how is your mother?" Ulrica asked, after she had listened to a long account of Basil, his doings, and his expected speedy arrival.

"Oh, mother is just the same as usual."

" And your sister?"

Chattie's lips curled with a slight sneer, yet she looked pained.

"Connie never changes much," she replied.

She would not say that her sister was at Dunworthy; she dreaded to bring a shade of sadness on Ulrica's face, which, since their meeting, had

grown several degress brighter.

Chattie knew what Connie's aim was, but she was not aware yet that that aim was already a fait accompli; for, although Miss Wren had informed her betrothed she had telegraphed to her mother the important news, she had not thought to acquaint her sister with it also; and, as Chattie had been staying with some relations, she knew nothing of the whole affair.

"Are you still angry with her?" Ulrica asked, putting a little reproach

into her voice.

"I suppose I am," Chattie answered. "It is very wrong, Ulrica, and I have tried over and over again to be friends with Connie, but never can; we have not a single thought in common."

Ulrica wisely changed the conversation.

"Where did you suddenly spring from? And are you going to stay

long?"

"Till you all get jolly sick of me," and Chattie laughed in her old merry fashion. "I have deposited mother with the Drakes, you know, our celebrated relations that Connie is always talking about, and am going to be Mammy Strong's guest for just as long as she will keep me."

Ulrica gave a little sigh of content. "How nice it sounds, Chattie!"

"Yes, doesn't it? And in a week's time Basil will be here, too; and then we shall have some larks, or my name is not Charlotte Wren!"

Guy came round the corner of the boat at this juncture.

"All confidences over? Well, then what do you say if we adjourn to luncheon?"

"I say yes, with all my heart, Uncle Guy. I can smell the cutlets from

nere.

"Not bad for a tip-tilted nose, Chattie."

Guy extended his hand to Ulrica as he spoke, and she rose to her feet slowly.

"Why, Ulrica, you are quite stiff! Have you been sitting here long?"

Chattie put the question lightly, but in her inmost heart the sight of the girl's weakness struck her with as much pain as a sword-thrust.

Ulrica laughed.

"I am getting old, Chattie—that is it," she said.

Chattie's answer was some joke, and she gossiped on lightly till the house was reached, not letting Ulrica see that she noticed anything unusual in the slow steps, and in the many times that Guy came to a standstill, apparently to point out some bit of picturesque scenery, in reality to give Ulrica a few seconds of rest before proceeding.

As they entered the house, and Ulrica had passed into the room, Chattie

pulled Guy back.

"Oh, Uncle Guy, how changed! How ill she is! What is it?"

Guy patted the soft cheek and looked tenderly at Chattie's full eyes and

quivering lips.

"You are as soft-hearted as ever, Chattie; but don't be alarmed. I am afraid you do see a change in Ulrica, but that is not to be wondered at. Remember all she has suffered, and also think of this illness — it would pull down many stronger than she!"

"Of course, I am a little fool," Chattie observed, "but I confess it did

shock me; but she will get stronger now she is with you, Uncle Guy?"

Guy checked a sigh.

"She is better each day," he answered almost curtly, and then passed on into the dining-room.

The advent of Chattie brought with it also a different atmosphere.

The three who had sat after dinner in silence, wrapped in their thoughts, were now routed out of them altogether, and found themselves laughing and chatting in the merriest fashion.

The color glowed on Ulrica's cheeks, and her depression seemed to

vanish at Chattie's approach.

Guy welcomed all signs of returning youth in the girl who had been plunged so suddenly, and so early into the sorrows of a woman, and he rejoiced at Chattie's success.

"Call yourself grown-up," he observed with mock frigidity, as the girl came dancing up the path one morning. "Why, you are an imp - a baby

-an infant!"

Chattie aimed a rose at him.

"No matter," she declared; "I shall have some one here to-morrow who will protect me from such base insinuations."

"Is Basil coming to-morrow?" asked Ulrica.

"He is, your gracious majesty. I only waited for his arrival before I delighted myself with a donkey-ride."

"What time does he come?"

"Some unearthly hour in the morning. Ulrica, shall you be glad to see him?"

"Very!" smiled Ulrica; "shall you?" Chattie shrugged her shoulders.

"So, so," she observed indifferently; "boys are such nuisances." Then tilting her hat low over her eyes, and plucking at the grass, she said slowly: "Yes, I shall be glad to see him - very glad."

"Ah!" observed Guy, rising and patting Chattie's head patronizingly as he passed, "it will be so pleasant to have some one to tell you your eyes

" Wretch!" cried Chattie.

Ulrica laughed softly.

"Never mind, Chattie; remember what the poet says:

'Eyes colored like a water flower, And deeper than the great sea's glass.'

Could anything sound more beautiful than that?"

"Only this: 'Eyes like stars of purity, blue, with the sapphire of leaven,' and that is what I heard said of your eyes once, Ulrica."

Ulrica colored for an instant, then her cheeks grew paler than before. "Let us go in and try to persuade mother to come down to the sea," she said, and she rose.

"Now, what a fool I am!" accused Chattie of herself as she followed

Ulrica indoors. "Of course I remember now; it was Tack who said that about her. Oh, my poor darling! and I have pained her by bringing it to her remembrance."

Vexed with herself, Chattie strove hard to efface the sad memories she

had awakened, and worked to apparent success.

Ulrica smiled and joined in the conversation as they made their way with Mrs. Strong's bath-chair to the shore, but her heart was throbbing and

beating with pain and intensity of longing.

"Oh, my love, if I could but see you once again - if I could but clasp your hand—lay my weary head on your shoulder, what a moment of bliss it would be! But that can never come. You will have grown to hate me - to believe me capable of deceiving - of wronging you. You will never know that it was for your sake - to save you - I yielded, and from my lips you shall never know it. But, oh, Jack, I am growing weary—sick with pain. Love cannot be crushed; it will wound me till I die."

So ran the current of her thoughts.

But no one guessed even at it. Outwardly she chatted and laughed, and seemed even better than ever, and Chattie's spirits rose as she saw this.

The next morning broke bright and beautiful.

Chattie stole into Ulrica's room.

"Do you feel equal to a drive so early?" she asked, as she saw the great blue eyes were wide open, and that a book lay on the table beside the bed. "Because if so, I thought you might like to come and meet Basil. I have had a letter, and his train only comes as far as Garth, so I shall trot over there."

Ulrica smiled.

"Well, I scarcely think I will come, Chattie. I am sure Basil will wish me many miles away."

"I am sure he will do nothing of the kind," observed Chattie, blushing

furiously.

Ulrica laughed softly to herself; then said, with a well-managed sigh: "Do you know, I scarcely do feel up to it this morning, Chattie."

"Oh, I'm so sorry; then I won't go," was Chattie's disconcerting remark.

"Now, Chattie, you vex me."
"Do I, darling?" inquired the girl, demurely.
"Yes, you do," and Ulrica tried to look severe. "Go off to Garth at once - at once, do you hear?"

"Mayn't I have some breakfast, please?"

Ulrica threw her book at the hamds held demurely before her.

"Go and eat, you most unromantic creature! I will see Basil when he

So Chattie danced away, and Ulrica began her task of dressing; it was a task indeed, as any one would have said, could they have watched the languid movements and long pauses between whiles.

"But where is Ulrica?" demanded Basil, as he stood in the fresh morning-room, with the sea-breezes softly stirring the muslin curtains on either side of the French-windows.

"Don't be impatient; you shall see her directly."

Basil snatched a kiss from his pretty love; then, as he held her close to him, he said:

"I say, Chattie, old fellow, I've got some news for you — some I don't think you will care about. Are you quite sure no one will hear us? I tried to tell you as we drove here, but it would not come easily."

"What is it, Basil?" Chattie asked quickly.

"Only that Connie has succeeded at last. She has caught Jack."

"Do you mean that she is engaged to Jack?" There was pained incredulity in Chattie's voice.

"Yes; there is no mistake about it, dear, for I have just seen Jack in town, and he told me of it himself. It is scarcely complimentary to Connie, but, by Jove, he does look wretched."

"Basil, did you speak of Ulrica?"

"No; I could not. I don't think he knows anything about her being here."

"Poor Tack!" breathed Chattie, with a sigh.

The sigh was echoed inaudibly outside the window. Ulrica had come softly onto the verandah from the garden; a smile was on her lips—a smile of welcome, but it faded away, leaving her face white and contracted with pain as Basil's voice sounded on her ears, and she heard the news that rang the knell to her lost love and her shattered dream.

Well, it was sudden, but it was not quite unexpected.

Ulrica was steeled in the lesson of endurance.

She forced her misery back, she choked the sob in her throat, and she went through the window and welcomed Basil with a lightheartedness that amazed him.

For one moment all her beauty seemed returned with transcendent splendor. It was almost the Ulrica of old that Basil saw; but the vision was but momentary.

As the two happy young people flitted away at a call from Mrs. Strong,

Ulrica's brightness fled.

She staggered to a chair, and sank into it, feeling once again weak,

wretched, and ill.

"It is hard to say," she mused sadly, as she gave way to her languor secure in her solitude, "yet God knows I wish him — yes, they — happiness! And yet — Oh, Jack — my Jack !"

## CHAPTER XXX.

THE night was dark and close in London when Graves left the train that had borne her from Seamouth and Ulrica.

She made her way to a lodging she had taken.

Her house and furniture she had sold, and with the money they brought she intended to satisfy her revenge.

All hope in life was centered once again in that object.

She was a curious nature—faith like a fanatic in things that she could

trust - love strong as iron for those her heart turned to.

She had thought that love killed when her only child's death, caused through shame, was told her; but Ulrica had wound herself deeper than she could ever know into the strange affections of this woman.

Horace Mott little guessed the sharp edges of this tool whom he had so

skillfully blinded.

He laughed at her for her implicit belief in him, and her straightforward method of life; but he misread Graves.

She could have faith and love, but she could also hate, and hatred with her was no term - it was existence.

She sat down in the dusk and worked out her plans.

It was from Mott's ex-valet - a man named Victor - she had learnt that her child's betrayer was in America, and thither she determined to go.

Her thoughts worked fleetly as she sat; the memory of Ulrica's pale.

beautiful face, with its sad eyes, stood out.

"I shall do you a service, my child," she murmured. "God cannot surely be angry with me. Why should this man live? Has he not destroyed you as he destroyed my child? It is a duty I alone can fulfill."

She was aroused by a loud ring at the bell, and immediately after by the entrance of her landlady, who stared hard at what she called "her mad

lodger."

"A man outside wants to see you."

Graves was on the alert. "Ask his name," she said.

The other woman handed her a dirty scrap of paper, on which a name was scrawled.

It was the man Victor's.

"Show him in," she said hurriedly.

The ex-valet came in quietly.

When the door was shut he lowered his voice.

"Your trip to America needn't come off. He's back."

Graves' hands were clenched; the fire of hatred and revenge glared in her eyes.

"In London?" was all she asked.

"Yes; at his old rooms, swelling it like the villain he is. He must have come back in the same steamer he went in, for he has been there. Shall you go to him?"

"This very night. Come with me."

"What will you give me for this?" the man asked eagerly.

For answer, Graves took an envelope from the bosom of her dress, and extracting a bank-note, tossed it to the man.

"That," she answered contemptuously; "but you must lead the way."

Victor whistled softly to himself. Will you come now?"

" All right. " Wait."

Graves went into her bedroom, and opened a box. She took out something, and hid it in the folds of her shawl.

"I am ready," she said to the man; and together they left the house. Through the hot streets, filled with a throng of people who came from their toil to get air, the two walked quickly. They did not speak.

Victor whistled softly, while he congratulated himself on his good

fortune, as his fingers caressed the fifty-pound note he had just received.

"She must have set her heart on the job, or she would not go tossing her money about like that."

He glanced now and then at the woman's set face, and, against himself, he shivered.

"She means mischief," he thought, nervously. "Well, I won't be in it. I won't go up-stairs. I'll leave her alone. If she kicks him, it will do him good."

The big thoroughfares were traversed, the street reached, and Victor

pointed to the door, at which Guy had stood that winter night, only a few hours too late to see Ulrica.

The man would have moved on, but she stopped.

"Wait till I see whether you have deceived me," Graves said grimly.

The door was opened by the caretaker of the chambers. He looked surprised as the woman asked for Mott.

"Yes, he's in; but he can't see no one. Let me take up your name."

"Show me his door; he is expecting me."

The caretaker hesitated; but as she slipped a sovereign into his hand he yielded.

He caught sight of Victor just as he was closing the door, and he called

to him loudly:

"Hi!—stop! You'll do to carry down some boxes. Hi!"

He shut the door on Victor, then ran quickly up the stairs, Graves following.

Victor remained, still whistling to himself.

"A new man — that's good," he said inwardly. "The other lot must have gone, and he'd have known me directly. Lor! I shall be glad to be away. Her face makes me shudder when I think of it!"

The caretaker ran down quickly.

"Strange looking party that," he observed to Victor. "Did you catch sight of her?"

"Yes," was the valet's reply. "I thought as how she were mad. She

were going on anyhow. Do you know her?"

"Never see her before; and I don't think Mr. Mott was over-pleased to meet her. He give me a look. But, there, I can't help it. Wait here a minute, I'll soon be back." The man returned into some lower region, leaving Victor in the hall, silent save for the ticking of the clock. It seemed an hour, but it was only a few seconds, and then the man returned. "Come on up-stairs. Gent's room on fourth floor."

The two went up the stairs, Victor not without some trepidation, it

must be confessed.

"It's deuced quiet," he thought to himself, as the moments passed.

But even as he did so, a shrick rang out on the stillness, followed by cries and loud voices.

The two men stood motionless, and grasped each other's hands, then simultaneously turned towards Mott's rooms.

To return to Graves.

As she followed the man into the apartment, Horace Mott had flung down his newspaper. Another man was in the room, lounging by the open window.

"Where the deuce do you come from?" Mott asked, with an oath.

Graves made no reply at once. Her face was pale as death. Then she smiled.

"Why ask me when you know? I am come from the deuce, Horace Mott."

The man by the window rose suddenly, but Ulrica's husband turned. "Don't go, Carter; there are no secrets, and you may be amused."

Graves' eyes traveled over Major Carter's rubicund countenance, that had a perturbed look on it.

"Yes - stay," she said, slowly; "you may be amused."

Mott laughed, but his face did not look pretty.

"And pray, why have you left your home? What work have you come to do? "

"Revenge!" cried the woman, suddenly.

Against himself Mott winced, but it was only for an instant.

"Revenge! For what, pray?"

"For your treachery-your miserable, cowardly sin. You who came to me with lies on your lips when you heard that I had sworn to take the life of the man who destroyed my child; you who deceived me; blind fool that I was; and worked me to your own ends. Yes - yes; revenge, Horace Mott! Life for life! As you have killed my child, and ruined that poor, young creature whom I - I! - helped to become your wife, so shall your life be taken. How do you like that picture, Horace Mott? Ah, you thought me your willing tool forever; but the veil has been drawn. I know you at last, and I have come for my revenge!"

"Are you drunk or mad?" asked Mott contemptuously.

"Scoff on," said the woman quietly. "I am neither one nor the other. My brain is as clear as yours. I can read your cowardly black heart to its innermost," she laughed a short, bitter laugh. "Well, fool as you have thought me, I have outwitted you. I have saved her, and in one short moment more I shall have freed her and avenged myself."

"Ring the bell, Carter," commanded Mott, contemptuously -he moved

away as he spoke; "we must rid ourselves of this Bedlamite."

But Carter did not go to the bell; his eyes were fixed on that woman's form, drawn up so horribly, so curiously against the table. Then he uttered an oath and seized Mott by the arm.

"'Ware!" he cried wildly, "she has a knife."

Mott's teeth were set in his pale lip; he leaped forward, evaded the thrust, clutched the two slender wrists in his strong hands, and grappled with his foe.

. Carter, his face frightened to a blue pallor, tried to get to the door, but

the struggling forms barred his progress.

It was an awful, a terrible sight - one he would never forget. His eyes were clouded for a time with the intensity of fear. Then they cleared. He saw the steel gleam in the lamplight. Then came one shriek. The woman's hold was loosened, she staggered back, and Mott fell, gasping and breathless, against the table.

"Quick! Call help!" he managed to say.

Even as he spoke the door was opened, and the caretaker followed by Victor, rushed in.

The scene was a strange one.

On the floor lay the form of Graves, face downwards. Carter, still terror-stricken, grasped a chair.

The two men at the door advanced slowly, as Mott, recovering himself with an oath, knelt down by the woman and tried to lift her head.

"What is it - murder?" gasped Victor.

Mott looked and fixed his late servant with his eye.

"If she is dead, she brought it on herself," he said quietly. "Carter can bear witness to that. Come round here, one of you, and give me a hand."

The man of the house knelt beside him, and Victor remained where he

was, feeling cold and sick at this termination of the meeting he had been instrumental in bringing about.

"Who is she? Do you know her, sir?" asked the caretaker hurriedly.

"She seemed mad."

"Poor soul! she is mad," was Mott's reply. Looking round again at Victor, he said tersely: "Fetch a policeman. I must be cleared of this."

The caretaker rose from his knees.

"We must have a doctor, too. I had better go. Stay here," he said to Victor with a meaning glance. "I will be back in an instant. This is an ugly night's work."

He went away hastily, leaving the three men silent, with Graves' still

form lying on the ground at their feet.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

CLRICA kept the knowledge she had learnt so curtly to herself. Connie's name was rarely mentioned by one of the party, and John Dunworthy's never, and Chattie could not bear to speak of the marriage, over which her mother and Connie were so jubilant, to the girl whose sad eyes and pale cheeks were a constant reminder that for her all happiness was gone.

"Ulrica, we are going to walk to Garth along the shore," Chattie said as she danced into the drawing-room one day. "Of course, it is too far for you, but will you meet us down by the old boat, and we can come

home together."

"Certainly." agreed Ulrica, putting away her work—a painting she was making of the garden with the sunlit sea in the distance. "I thought

of going there with my book."

"We are starting now; it will take us a good hour and a half; so if you like to wait a little longer, and then saunter down, you can. Uncle Guy is out—gone to some sick child, of course; bless that man. how many sick children has he cured? Mammy Strong is lying down."

"We will not disturb her, then," said Ulrica.

"I will just run and tell Bruce we shall be at the old boat in an hour's time in case we should be wanted. Give me a kiss, old girl. Do you know, Ulrica, you are looking so sweet?"

Ulrica smiled, but the smile went as Chattie disappeared.

She wore a pale pink cotton, a band encircling her slender waist. Guy had gone into her money matters, and all of a sudden she was quite rich. The return of wealth, her father's money, brought no pleasure, save that she was always scheming how best she could use it for the relief of

others.

"Yes," mused Ulrica as she wrapped her shawl round her, "that is it —

sleep - sleep and forgetfulness. I am so tired of all."

She shivered slightly and sank back in her corner to wait for Chattie and Basil.

Her thoughts would wonder to the sea; though she opened her book, her

eyes did not look at it.

"Is it wrong to wish it?" she asked 'herself; "is it wicked to long for the end? Ah, well! I am weak, and the struggle cannot linger forever."

She sat still thinking for awhile, and the children's voices were carried

on the wind, forming a harmony to her sad, peaceful mood.

The sound of some one approaching broke the thread of Ulrica's mus-

"They can't be back already; or have I been asleep? Oh no, it must be Joe, or one of the fishermen. Well, I will talk to him, if he has time."

She shut her book and waited, then drew her shawl still closer round

The footsteps had come to a standstill close beside her. A vague intuition of pain and pleasure ran over her; she rose, cast her eyes round, then with an exclamation sank back in her seat, her hand pressed to her heart, her book fallen at her feet, the wind playing with the open leaves heed-

It was no fisherman she beheld, nor Guy, only a grave, handsome face, with a misery of eagerness in the eyes gazing at her — her lover, John Dun-

worthy.

Sir John was by her side as she leaned back against the boat's side, so

white and frail.

"Ulrica, Ulrica! My God! I have killed her. It has frightened her. The shock was too much for her, as for me too! I thought myself brave, but I had not reckoned on this. Ulrica—oh, speak to me—look at me my one, sweet love!"

Slowly the color ebbed into her cheeks, and the eyelids were lifted.

"It is no dream," murmured Ulrica; "it is you, Jack!"

Sir John pressed her cold hands to his lips passionately, the misery in his heart almost choking him.

"Oh, my darling!" was all he could say; "my darling!"

Weak as she was, stunned as she was by the shock, the agony in his

voice recalled Ulrica.

"Don't," she pleaded gently—"don't, Jack; you break my heart, dear! Let us thank God that we are permitted to see one another—if only once again. You startled me at first; but now," she smiled faintly, "now, dear, you see I am all right. I can speak to you. You have come What have you to say?"

"I did not seek this meeting, Ulrica. I did not even know you were here. I came down to see Guy and Basil; but oh, my darling! if you knew what I have suffered - how I have struggled to keep myself from finding you; and now - now, when, God knows, I want all my courage, I

see you thus!"

His eyes dropped for a moment, then he lifted them again to her sweet,

pure face.

"It is fate," he whispered passionately. "Ulrica, we meet never to part. Yes -yes, that is it. Oh, my darling, my lost love, at last you will be mine; at last I can take you in my arms and shield you from all harm to come. It must be so — yes, it must be so." Ulrica's whole form trembled.

Oh, what a vista of happiness seemed suddenly to stretch before her; for one instant she revelled in it, then a cloak fell over that picture—a

cloak of shame. It could never be.

" Tack," she said slowly, "my darling, could you but see into my heart and read its secret, you would know what these words cost me. It can never be. I - I am bound, tied - you are not free; we must part. It is sweet to see you, to hold your hands, to hear your voice - how I have prayed for it all; but it is false sweetness. Jack, you must go, you must."

She broke off and sank back with a shuddering sigh, her face growing

pale even to the lips.

"And you tell me to go when you are like this!" cried Sir John madly. "It is cruel, Ulrica. Not free? What bond would hold me from you? I have never swerved from my fealty to you, my queen, my love. Oh, Ulrica, don't drive me to despair. Would ten thousand women like Connie part us? You know they would not; then speak to me, tell me."

He drew the frail, slender form into his arms.

"Ulrica!" he cried wildly, "speak to me! Do you not hear?"

The heavy eyelids opened for an instant. "Take me home, Jack; I am so tired."

"I feared this," said Guy tersely, "and hurried on here as soon as I learnt that you had come. Run and get me some water, quick, and then we must carry ber home. Ah, Dunworthy, I wish from my heart, old fellow, you had never met again. It can only mean greater sorrow to you both.

# CHAPTER XXXII.

IS the sound of the footsteps of the fleeting caretaker died away, Mott looked round savagely at Victor.

"This is some of your infernal work!"

Victor shuddered.

"Have you killed her?" he breathed.

Mott left the silent form of the woman and gripped the arm of his late

servant with a grip of iron.

"If she be dead, she brought it on herself. I shall be exonerated from blame, but it is best to be armed at all points. How much do you want? Quick, your price! Hang you! can't you speak?"

"What am I to do?" asked Victor, still appalled with horror.

"Swear you thought the woman mad; don't seem as if you had ever seen me before - you understand? You shall be paid handsomely. Hush! not a word more. Here they are.

"The doctor is coming," he gasped.
The policeman stooped over the body and put his hand on the heart. "This is an ugly case," he said as if to himself, then produced a note-

"I will just take one or two notes till the doctor comes, if you please,

Horace Mott was wiping his brow with his handkerchief. He looked very pale; part of his elaborate smoking-jacket was torn. Major Carter sat still, never opening his lips. Victor stood by the table.

"Certainly," Mott replied; "I will give you all the information in my

power."

The doctor arrived while he was stating this clearly and concisely, and there was a breathless silence while the medical man made a short examination of the wounded woman.

"I can do nothing," he said, as he finished; "she has been dead I should say about ten minutes; this," holding up the dagger, "has gone straight to

the heart."

There was a murmur, a shudder through the bystanders, as the policeman took the small weapon and examined it closely.

"The name of the maker is on it, which is fortunate for you, sir," he said to Mott.

The latter merely nodded his head.

"I suppose I must come with you," he observed, after he had detailed the circumstances of Graves' attack upon him.

"If you please, sir."

Mott moved to his dressing-room.

"Wake up!" he muttered savagely in Carter's ear; then with the same nonchalant air he passed out of the room, the policeman following him

respectfully but decidedly.

"She spoke of Ulrica," ran Mott's thoughts as he changed his clothes for some outdoor garments. "If I could but have got some clew before she went. Well, Victor knows more than he thinks, I guess. It will be odd if I don't run my wife to earth—she will not leave me in a hurry again when I do find her!"

Then with a composed face he returned into the sitting-room, where a sheet was already flung over the dead woman, preparatory to the body

being carried away for an inquest.

Victor, the man of the house, Major Carter, and one or two others were warned their presence would be necessary at the inquiry, and then, with a glitter in his dark eyes that betokened no sorrow for the direful deed his hands had performed, Horace Mott went forth under the protection of the law.

Guy bent over the girl's silent form with an agony of love and misery in his heart.

"If I could but bear you away - away from all the trials that beset your

young life," he thought to himself.

Sir John was back almost in an instant, with his handkerchief soaked in the sea water.

Guy took it from him.

"Dunworthy," he said quietly, almost severely, "you must leave us; walk along the sands to your right —you will meet Chattie and Basil; but you must not stay here—it is cruel to her."

Sir John's answer was to seat himself down on the old boat, cover his

face with his hands, and groan aloud.

"I cannot go - I cannot," he muttered with his head bent.

"Then you are selfish—you think only of yourself." Guy spoke curtly. "You ask me to leave her when she looks like this!" Sir John lifted his face, from which even the youth seemed fled, and pointed at the girl's, whose trembling lips alone showed that life remained in her body, so deathly white was the lovely countenance. "By Heavens! Guy, I cannot — I will not! I must speak to her. Fate has thrown us together, and I will grasp this chance!"

"To what end?" asked Guy sternly. "Do you love her? You say so, then what can come of prolonging an interview that you see has caused her already so much pain? Believe me, dear old man, I feel for you — from the bottom of my heart I feel, but there is only one course open to you —

to go away at once and without delay.

Sir John pressed one hand over his eyes.

"Well, I will leave you now, but I shall not be far away. And give me your solemn promise, Guy, that if—if she should ask for me, you will fetch

me directly."

"I promise," Guy replied; then seeing the dark fringed eyelids quiver, he waved his hand quickly. "Go now; she will be better alone with me."

He could not bear that any one should speak to him at this moment; his anguish, the passion of his despairing love, was so great.

Ulrica's eyes, opening from that land of strange unconscious darkness,

met the tender well-known ones set in Guy's face.

"Uncle Guy, you — Where—what has happened to me?" she tried to whisper.

"You have been foolish enough to faint—that is all," he answered with

one of his rare smiles.

"Faint," she repeated; "why—" Then memory came back; she smiled faintly, but with intense sadness. "Ah, yes, I know all now."

"When you feel a little better, Ulrica," he observed gently, "I will

leave you to fetch a bath-chair, you are not fit to walk home."

"Indeed I am," she replied, exerting herself to rise into a sitting position, and bringing a fleeting lovely shade of color into her pale cheeks as she did so. "See, I am quite strong!"

"A perfect amazon," smiled Guy, though his eyes looked weary as with

sudden pain; "still, I think, dear, it will be wiser to have the chair."

Ulrica's strength was indeed not lasting; as he spoke she sank back almost exhausted.

"Yes, you are right, Uncle Guy, as you always are."

Guy stood beside her while she rested, her eyes gazing across the sea,

which was beginning to ebb and flow now.

The sun was sinking a little in the heavens, and its golden beams were just tinged with a shade of growing red that comes in the early autumn days.

The girl's face was touched by these ruddy golden rays, and it seemed

transfigured to Guy, so pure and delicate did it look.

Suddenly Ulrica put out her hand,

"Uncle Guy," she said softly. lifting her glorious eyes to him, "Jack is here still?"

"Yes, dear."

A shade fell over Guy's face.

"Is it wrong to see him? Oh, if I could see him just once more, before ——"

"Before what?" Guy's voice sounded almost harsh.

"Before he goes forever — I think I should be better if I did."
"I will take you home, and you shall see him to-night."
Who could tell the anguish, the unselfishness in Guy's heart?

"You promise?" she asked softly.
"I promise, dear; he shall come."

Then he moved away, and Ulrica was left alone gazing across the sunlit waters with a smile on her lips and a strange, new glory in her eyes, till Guy returned with a chair and she was drawn slowly home.

### CHAPTER XXXIII.

MHE afternoon hours had faded into evening dusk, and thence into the silver radiance of the moon's warm beams, when John Dunworthy

strode through the small village to take arewell of his love.

Ulrica seemed to grow stronger each moment; she encouraged Chattie to laugh and joke; she refused to see the sense of pain and discomfort that hung over the whole party; and as the moon broke out over the sea she begged Guy to let her put a shawl around her and wander into the garden. He shook his head, but she pleaded prettily.

"For just this once, Dr. Guy," she said, putting her two white hands in his and resting her head on his shoulder. "Only this once;" then her voice lowered: "I should like to meet Jack in the moonlight and the music of the waves." She laughed a short laugh that betrayed her suffering to Guy's quick ear. "It sounds so romantic, doesn't it, Uncle Guy?" "Ulrica," he said quietly, "are you wise? Will not this meeting mean

more suffering, dear ?"

"Wise!" she repeated with a sigh of unutterable sadness; "who can have wisdom with love?"

There was a moment's silence, and then she lifted her face and pressed a

kiss on his cheek.

"Ah, my dear, my true friend, don't chide me - don't reason! I must see him once again; and then!" She moved away suddenly, threw the light woolen shawl over her head and shoulders and stepped into the garden, her garments of white serge, made in long, plain folds, trailing after her. She was standing in the moonlight, looking like some pale lovely spirit as John Dunworthy came up the garden path. Their hands were stretched out and grasped silently, their eyes met, dark with the mutual burden of sorrow.

Ulrica spoke first.

"Give me your arm," she said gently. "Let us turn down here; there is a gate at the end, and we can see over the sea."

"But are you strong enough?" he asked huskily.

"To night I feel my old self once more; and, Jack, I want to speak with you."

Tenderly he drew her hand through his arm, and they wandered down

to the gate.

Ulrica leaned against one of the posts and looked across the silverflecked water.

Sir John still held her hand as she gazed out to the dark sea border.

At last she spoke.

"Words are not easy, dear," she said faintly. "I have longed, I have prayed in the hour of my darkest misery for such a moment as this, and

now when it has come my lips seem almost dumb."

"There are only five words I ask you to speak." Sir John's voice was harsh with agitation. "Ulrica, grant me this one request. Say, 'Jack, I love you still.' My heart craves for that, Ulrica; it hungers, and must be satisfied!"

"Love you still!" the girl breathed softly, tremulously; "no, no, it is too poor! I love you more, ten thousand times more, than when we parted! Jack, you are my hero, my king, my one living thought! Yes, it is the truth I speak now for the last time."

"The last time! No, Ulrica; with such words ringing in my ears; do you think I will leave you? My place is by your side, my darling, from

now till the end."

Ulrica's hands covered her eyes; she would not see the pleading in his face.

"Forgive me," she whispered; "I am wrong; the sudden knowledge that you were beside me, drove me to say those words. Forgive me—oh, forgive me!"

"What is to keep us asunder?" cried the man suddenly and passionately.

"You owe no duty, no obligation to him."

"Honor must part us."

Ulrica's voice penetrated him like a knife.

"Jack," she went on hurriedly, "it was wrong—yes, I see it now, wrong to ask you to come—to let you come here to-night; it was better we should have parted on the shore this afternoon; this must mean more pain to us, but I was weak, I hungered to see your face once more, to grasp your hand, to hear your voice sound in my ears as it used to only one short year ago. But I was selfish.; I should have thought of you, my

darling - I should have thought of you."

"Urica, listen to me. Before God, I swear I have been true to your dear memory, as though you had been my wife. I owe Connie Wren no duty; she trapped me too cunningly. Don't think me mean, cowardly, for saying this, but it is true. I have told her my heart can ever be hers, but she does not marry me for that —my title, my rank, my riches are things far more to her taste; why, then should I consider her? Come with me; we will leave England, go away together. Ulrica, Ulrica! I

cannot live without you! You must come!"

"Jack," Ulrica put her hand on his, "how you are maligning your nature! You to put aside honor, esteem, respect? No, no, dear one; the sacrifice shall never be made for me. Go back to the world. Go back to Connie; you have pledged your word to her, it must never be broken; is it not for your no cility that I love you? Yes; then let not my life be made sadder by the thought that I had been instrumental in bringing the faintest cloud on that honor Be brave, as you can be. God has decreed our lives must be apart; we must not rebel against his command. Think, my darling, life is not only in these few short moments of misery; the world is before you, Jack; go into it, and remember that my love for you did not tarnish your self-respect and honor, but spurred you on to value them as you value life."

The words had come quickly from Ulrica's lips. Her face seemed to Sir John the face of an angel; her voice the sweetest music he had ever heard; she looked the incarnation of nobility and purity, and every word

went home.

He stood silent for a while. In that moment he fought the bitterest battle of his life. Love struggled — urged him on; but Ulrica had not spoken in vain. He turned round suddenly, then, stooping for her hand, he pressed his lips to it tenderly.

"I will do as you say, my darling - my pure love - though the task cost

me as it must, a lifetime of misery."

Ulrica smiled on him, and her lips formed rather than spoke:

"God bless you, my dearest! Now go — quickly! Say good-bye to them all. We must not meet again, Jack, or our courage will fail."

He buried his face on his arms, folded on the gate. For many minutes he stood thus, while she placed her trembling hand on his head, giving him a silent blessing.

"Yes, I must go. Good-bye, my one sweet love! God have you in

His keeping! I --- "

Words choked themselves in a great sob, and, with a gesture of farewell, John Dunworthy turned abruptly away and strode out of the moonlight into the dark shadows.

Connie, meanwhile, was in the very height of -to her - pleasurable business.

Her whole time was occupied by the demands of her dressmakers, mil-

liners, tailors, etc.

She was in London, under the chaperonage of her future mother-in-law, though she grew irritable beyond control almost at Lady Dunworthy's interference and love of arrangement.

The fact, too, that Sir John was very seldom in attendance upon her was most annoying to his *fiancée*, whose small nature would have loved to have paraded her conquest before the world on every possible opportunity.

No exact date had been fixed for the wedding-day, though Connie and Lady Dunworthy had come to the conclusion that there was really no cause for delay; and the ceremony might take place as soon as the trousseau could be got ready.

Sir John, on leaving Seamouth, traveled by express up to London; but nothing was further from his thoughts than a visit then to either his mother

or the girl who was to be his wife.

He passed a wretched night, and, in the morning, rose with a conclusion in his mind.

"If I stay in England I shall go mad," he said to himself. "I will go abroad again for some time. Connie can make as much as she likes of her engagement to me, but the marriage cannot—shall not—be just yet."

This intention was strengthened and settled as he opened his morning

paper, and his eyes rested on a paragraph.

His prow darkened, and his teeth met in his lip.

The words he read dwelt on Horace Mott and the stabbing affray, resulting in a verdict of acquittal for him, brought about by the strongest evidence in his favor, given by Victor, the caretaker, and Major Carter.

"Good God! And this is the brute to whom she is tied. If we but knew, this is a case of murder, perhaps. Yes—yes; I must go now, for if I stay in England no power of man will keep me from her; and I shall have proved myself unworthy of her pure great love! Oh, Ulrica, Ulrica, you little guess, dear, how hard a task you have set me!"

He stood gazing out of the window in a blank way as his thoughts

worked on.

"If there were but one glimmer of hope, I could endure this and more for your sake; but the way is so dark; each step but separates me from you, and my feet falter."

He began to pace the room in a quick, nervous way; then came to a

standstill.

"Come, John Dunworthy, don't let your conscience call you a coward! think of her, and remember her dear words. Get to your task with all the bravery, the nobility she credits you with. Does she falter—and what is your struggle and pain to hers?"

So thinking, he got his hat, and was driven off rapidly to the hotel, where his mother and Connie were staying.

Lady Dunworthy was in a small room, which she grandiloquently de-

scribed as her boudoir, and Connie was with her.

Lady Dunworthy uttered an exclamation when her son came in ; Connie blushed, but was by no means averse to her betrothed seeing her in deshabille.

"At last, John! Where have you been?" cried his mother.

"In London for the last day, or rather night," was his terse reply. He made no movement to kiss Connie; he was ready to fulfill his word of honor, and make her his wife, but he was no hypocrite; caresses to her were impossible.

"And before then?" asked Connie coyly.

"I went down into the country to see a friend. What have you been doing?"

Lady Dunworthy nodded her large head.

"As busy as two women can be. A wedding does not come every day, remember. John."

He shivered slightly.

A wedding! Was it not more like a funeral, so hideous did it seem. "Mother, will you pardon me if I ask you a favor? I want to speak to Connie alone."

He put out his hand to lead her to the door.

Lady Dunworthy beamed graciously.

"Of course! How remiss of me! Do forgive me; I shall not disturb you for a quarter of an hour."

"Five minutes will suffice," he replied.

Connie started, and her face was disfigured with a frown: there was something in his grave voice not pleasant to hear.

She turned to him with a smile as soon as they were alone. "Well, what important communication am I to hear, Jack?"

Sir John winced.

"This," he said coldly; "I don't think it is necessary, Connie, to go back to the night of our engagement; I believe you remember clearly what happened -how I spoke to you openly, perhaps curtly, saying that I had no love to offer you, and that a marriage between us could never afford me any happiness."

Connie stood with her back to him; the full effect of her yellow silky hair was revealed, but it had no enthralling beauty to him; it spoke too clearly of coldness, hardness and unreality; and the vision of Ulrica's pale, sad lovely face, set in the framework of dark-brown short locks, the remnant of her once luxuriant masses, was too prominently before his eyes.

Connie's two hands were clenched tightly together.
"Yes," she said, but not very distinctly; "I remember well."

"Then my task is easier," Sir John continued. "I do not pretend to say that this marriage is even an agreeable thought to me. that has come into my life is not one to be effaced or to be glossed over by such means. In my heart I feel that I am untrue and treacherous to the woman who sacrificed her life's happiness to save me from all-treatment, as she was falsely made to believe. No; this would be impossible. It rested in your hands, Connie, that other night, to have delivered me from my painful position, but this you would not do. You have chosen to link your life with me. So be it; as a man of honor, I can do nothing but gratify

your ambition, but at the same time I must beg, with your permission, to postpone the date of our marriage to some more distant opportunity."

Connie, behind the barrier of her flowing hair, felt cold and sick with

dlsappointment.

"What reason have you for this?" she asked. He gave a short, bitter sigh.

"I wish to go abroad again for some months."

"You mean you wish to leave England?" cried Connie, letting her petty spite and never-dying jealousy of Ulrica flame out. "Oh, I begin to understand! You have met that false creature again, and she is trying to make you break your word. I --- "

"Silence!"

Sir John's face had never looked to Connie as it did now; his hand fell

on her shoulder almost heavily.

"Dare to speak of her in that way again, and honor or no honor, I swear you shall never be my wife! Oh, how pitifut-how miserable must be your nature to say such things of one who never injured you, and who, even at every cost, has pleaded your cause, like the angel she is!"

"I am infinitely obliged," Connie sneered, just looking at him with her

cold blue eyes; "but I prefer not to be pleaded for by her."

Sir John let his hand fall away from her shoulder.

"Well, what is it to be - my wealth, title, name, or nothing?"

In his heart he whispered:

"If she have the smallest pride she must release me!"

But he little knew Connie Wren.

She moved languidly from the window to the table.

"Since you have been so candid with me, I may as well return the compliment. I am not so easily vanquished, Sir John, and I hold you to your word. It is to be your name, wealth, and title, with your permission.

"Good!" the young man took up his hat and went to the door "I may be absent six months. Which would you prefer, to tell my mother your-self or let me do that?"

He spoke as to the merest stranger. "Leave it to me," Connie said hurriedly.

Sir John bowed courteously, opened the door, and went away without another word.

Outside in the sunshine he heaved a sigh as if some hope were gone.

"I have fulfilled your wish, my darling," he said to himself. "Henceforth I am pledged apart from you, with only the memory of our brief, great happiness to shine in my heart—only the memory of your purity, your unselfishness, to spur me on to good."

#### CHAPTER XXXIV.

ULRICA was strangely quiet, yet contented—at least, so it seemed to the others, after that meeting with her lover.

She was careful to disguise from them all what suffering lived in her

breast, and how miserable she was indeed.

One short note had come to her a few days later, and she read it down by the sea, the ripple of the waves sounding an accompaniment to it as she read each word:

"I have done as you asked, my darling. If you hear I am gone abroad, you will know it is only because I cannot lose your memory yet, and forget the links that almost eat into me with their misery Think of me, pray for me, Ulrica, as I will for you; the prayers of such a soul as yours must be heard. I will turn to your dear memory as to a guardian angel, from whom purity and goodness come. Ulrica, God bless you, my one precious, my only love!

JACK."

She carried the senseless paper to her lips, then put it next her heart and

gazed at the sea with a mist of unshed tears in her eyes.

She turned her back on the waves and went towards the cottage.

"After all, I am wrong to wish for things that cannot come. Let me think of all the blessings I have now—love and sympathy from four true hearts—is not that a treasure I ought to value?"

News was slow to travel down to Seamouth. Guy used to go to the small hotel and read the daily papers; was it some instinct that warned him to keep them from Ulrica's reach? His mother never cared for such things, and Basil and Chattie were too happy to give a second thought to what was going on in the world, so no one but Guy knew of Graves' death and the reappearance of Horace Mott in London.

He was shocked and puzzled how to act, especially as Ulrica began to

express her wonder that Graves never wrote.

On the morning that John Dunworthy's little note came to her, Guy had gone out on purpose to commune with himself as to how he should

break the news to her.

Ulrica paced the shore slowly; she soon felt tired, and, by herself, was some time in reaching the house. She was just leaving a group of fishing-boats, pulled up high, as the tide came in strong and full now, when a voice accosted her.

A cold shiver passed through her; a man came from behind one of the

boats.

"Mrs. Mott - madam," he muttered quickly.

Ulrica stopped.

She recognized him at ouce as her husband's valet—the man he had discharged.

She put out one of her frail hands and supported her trembling limbs

against a boat.

"What do you want?" she faltered.

The man looked at her with some pity in his eyes. How changed she was! he remembered her wonderful beauty of only a year past. But pity did not last long.

"I have been waiting to catch you," was his answer. "I have some

information for you."

Ulrica looked up at him silently.

"I'm poor and can't be generous," went on Victor; "but I'll sell it to you."

Ulrica tried to shake off her weakness.

"Information! sell!" she repeated as her eyes closed for an instant;
"that do you want me to give you?"

Victor checked a whistle.

'Then it is true; she 'ave got money," he said to himself.

'Have you got twenty pounds?" he asked, eagerly.

'It shall be sent you, you can trust me."

Victor nodded his head.

"Yes, that I can, ma'am. Well, here goes: Yer husband 'as found out where you is; he's coming down after you. I suppose you've heard as he've got off for stabbing that woman Graves to death, he—"

" What!"

Ulrica's eyes were fixed on the man with an expression of horror, she turned ghastly pale, and staggered against the boat. Her very lips seemed frozen. Then a sudden burst of strength came to her. She waved him aside.

"Don't tell me any more, I cannot bear it - follow me. The money

shall \_\_\_"

Victor did as he was bid. He followed the slender form as it walked slowly and with difficulty to the house, and after a few minutes a neat maid brought him an envelope, which, on opening eagerly, he found contained four five-pound bank-notes.

"She is a woman of her word, by George!" he thought.

He whistled to himself as he made his way to the hotel and ordered some brandy, then gave himself up to the delight of admiring his banknotes once again.

The bar was empty, as he thought; but while he was making his calcula-

tions, a hand was put on his shoulder, and a voice rang in his ear:

"Very good, but you really should make your plans better."

It was Horace Mott, of whose advent Victor had just warned Ulrica, but whom he little expected to see.

The man was nonplussed.

"This letter, my dear Victor," Mott continued, showing an envelope, from my dear wife to Graves, found on my floor, has put me in possession of everything I care to know. Ha, ha! Mrs. Mott will not be so bountiful of her five-pound notes in future!"

Chattie danced up stairs from her walk, but Mary came forward and warned her not to wake Ulrica.

"She has gone to take a rest; she has been writing some letters, miss."

Chattie stole away, and the afternoon crept into evening.

Guy had gone up to Ulrica's door, but finding everything quiet, he refrained from disturbing her; rest, he knew, was the best thing in her weak state.

As they sat at dinner, a ring came at the gate, and Guy rose with a strange sense of coming evil as Bruce ushered in a gentleman.

Though he smiled and held out his hand, no one responded.

"I am sorry to intrude upon you," said Horace Mott pleasantly; "my visit is to my wife."

Guy put one hand on a chair; his voice was cold and hard.

"I am Mrs. Mott's medical attendant, and I regret that I cannot permit you to see her; she is not strong enough to bear the excitement."

"I am the best judge of that; kindly lead me to her room, or inform

her of my presence."

An ominous frown was on Horace Mott's face.
"Mother, will you go to Ulrica, or shall I?"

Mrs. Strong had grown pale.

"You go, Guy; tell her she shall never be taken from me. Sir," continued Mrs. Strong, turning to Mott, "I beg to inform you that I refuse to permit Ulrica to go with you; she will at our instigation institute proceedings for an immediate separation."

"Indeed," was all Mott said, with an ugly look round his mouth; "that will be both expensive and useless, I think; in the meantime I insist on seeing my wife. I can quite understand you have a good motive in keeping Mrs. Mott with you, madam, now that she is possessed of her large fortune again."

Basil rose as if to strike the speaker, but Chattie pulled him back.

Guy merely pressed his mother's hand, then turned to-Mott.

"Wait here, sir; I will inform Ulrica of your presence and wish; but understand me, if she refuses to see you, I shall abide by that wish."

He left the room, and went slowly up-stairs.

Mott stood in a languid easy attitude, but neither of the three left addressed him.

Suddenly his name was called.

Guy's voice sounded curiously strained and harsh. His mother started as if she did not know it.

Bruce held open the door, and led Horace Mott up-stairs.

On the landing Guy met him.

"You insist on seeing your wife?" he asked. Even in the twilight Mott could see how gray his face looked.

"I do," was the fierce answer.

"Then follow me!"

Mott turned and walked up the small passage. A door was ajar, a soft breeze floated in through an open window. A chair was drawn up at the window, and in this reclined a woman's form.

"Speak to her," said Guy.

Mott strode over to the chair, bent his head, and then recoiled.

His gaze rested on a cold, set face; two great staring eyes met his, a mouth, still symmetrical, half open; it was awful, a beautiful face still—the face of death.

He wiped his brow and staggered to the window, while Guy knelt down

beside the chair and buried his face in his hands.

Ulrica's troubles were ended at last; no fears, no regrets, no shame, no love, now she was dead.

"I bequeath to Charlotte Wren all the money I possess in the world on.

condition that she marries Basil Morne within a year."

So ran the short will drawn up on half a sheet of note-paper, and signed by Bruce and Mary, found on the table beside Ulrica. Even to the last her thoughts were of others; she knew Chattie and Basil had not enough to marry on, and she determined their happiness should come if possible.

At first neither Basil nor she could bring themselves to accept their happiness from the tender dead hand; but Guy, who seemed to have grown quiet and almost old, spoke eloquently to them on the subject at length, dwelt on the loyalty they owed to that last-written wish, and they yielded.

Unknown to Chattie, Horace Mott had threatened to bring a law-suit against her to recover his wife's money, left, so he urged, by undue influ-

ence, away from him.

He was never heard of by any of them more, save by Guy, and he kept silent. Only once did he open his lips on the subject, and that was years after to John Dunworthy, who, grown into a cold, hard, prematurely aged man, came to see him at Bathurst, in one of his fleeting visits to his native land.

They were wandering in the grounds bathed in the sunlight, as they had been in those bygone days, when Guy spoke.

"Jack," he said, "will you tell me of that man's end?"

Sir John shuddered slightly.

"It was terrible, Guy. Even I, who had cause to hate him as much as any one, pitied him. Several times in my travels I came across him; each time he looked more miserable and debased. It was at Montreal, our last meeting. I learnt afterwards that he had sunk so low through depravity and want as to take Government money from Russia, to spy out the Nihilist doings; and to further this end, he became one of a secret body of conspirators. I saw him the very morning of his last day on earth; the news of his treacherous calling had come to the ears of the heads of the secret society, and maddened by his treachery, they literally tore him to pieces. It was their last work before they were shipped off to Russia, denounced through Mott, and they did it well. The authorities tried to save him in vain. Even I went to get aid to tear him from his late comrades. I was too late; he had already been executed, and died a traitor's death."

Guy was silent for a moment.

"God have mercy on his soul!" he said slowly after a pause; then put-

ting his hand on John Dunworthy's arm, he went on :

"Jack, there is something else I want to ask you. Are you never coming back to Dunworthy and your wife? Remember you have duties."

"I owe none to her," was the stern reply, "Guy, don't speak of this again. Had I ever seen one single spark of kindness, of womanliness in Connie, I might have altered; but there is none. Three times I flung myself on her generosity, and each time she kept me to my word, knowing full well that my heart was broken and buried in my one love's grave. I fulfilled my word. She is my wife; she has that for which she married me —my rank and riches, and she has what gives her happiness. I have my freedom, and that is all I ask. Come, Guy, you know there is little trouble to be seen on Constance, Lady Dunworthy's worldly face."

Guy did not answer at first; this last remark could not be contradicted

he knew right well.

"Can you never forgive her, Jack?" he asked.

"I have forgiven her long ago; but there it all must end. She can never be anything to me."

They changed the conversation, and strolled on till the hour came for

parting.

As they clasped hands in farewell once more, they little thought it would be for the last time.

Bathurst never saw John Dunworthy again. His yacht was wrecked in the Bay of Biscay, and he perished trying to rescue one of the crew.

Guy Strong was sitting in his study when the news came.

It did not surprise him. So much sorrow had come of late - for his

mother, too, had passed away - that he was resigned to all.

He rose after a while, and going to his cabinet took out a scrap of paper; it was a broken letter formed by Ulrica's dear hand that summer night so long ago, and ran thus:

"Dearest, truest Friend:— The end has come. I have known for the past year how weak my heart has been, though you have thought me ignorant; to-day I have received a shock; I can scarcely hold the pen. God bless you all—mother, Jack, and you! I am——"

That was all.

"In life they had sorrow and pain," Guy said softly to himself as he touched this treasured letter with his lips, "in death maybe they are united."

The paper on which it was written had grown brown and old, but at Bathurst, down by the village church, stood a white cross that, despite the wind and rain, was never discolored, and at its base a mass of flowers was strewn fresh and fragrant by loving hands every day.

The inscription on the cross was short:

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